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From sefira@torah.org
This is a Sefira reminder for Friday evening, June 2.
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Hayom chameeshah vih-arba-im yom sheh-haim sheeshah shavuos (or shavuot) oo-shiloshah yamim ba-omer
Today is the 46th day, which is 6 weeks and 4 days, of the omer.

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Pulling an All-Nighter
By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz

The scene is familiar. An auditorium or hall is stuffed full of bodies hunched over books. In the corner, there's a table bearing snacks and caffeinated beverages. It could be any pre-finals study session in any college in the world but it isn't. You've stumbled into a synagogue on the night of Shavuot, when the custom is to stay up late studying Torah, in anticipation of the next morning's re-enactment of its transmission at Sinai.

Our current practice to stay up all night learning Torah is attributed to Rav Yosef Karo, the 16th-century codifier of the Shulchan Aruch, though its roots are much older. The Zohar speaks of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in the second century, staying up all night. His reason for doing so is compared to an attendant helping to prepare a

bride prior to her wedding. (A common metaphor for the revelation at Sinai is a wedding between God and the Jewish people.) The ultimate basis for the tradition is a Midrash in Shir HaShirim Rabbah to the effect that on the morning when God was to give them the Torah, the Jews slept in, showing a lack of enthusiasm. Throughout the generations, we rectify this national flaw through the many enthusiastic volunteers who spend the entire night engaged in study to show their love of God and appreciation for the gift of His Torah.

There is no particular course of study required for the night, though the Arizal, the famed Medieval Kabbalist, organized a selection of Biblical and Talmudic passages into a text called the Tikkun Leil Shavuot ("Order for the Night of Shavuot"). Some have colloquially come to refer to the all-night study session itself as "tikkun leil Shavuot." While not technically accurate, it is also not wholly inappropriate. The word "tikkun" in Hebrew can also mean a repair or a correction. While such was not the intention of the Arizal, it is perhaps a fitting way to refer to the night's activities, seeing as they are intended to make up for the oversight of our ancestors.

The custom as originally established was specifically to stay up learning the Tikkun Leil Shavuot text, which contains excerpts of the books of Tanach, the Jewish Bible, as a means of preparing to receive the Torah in the morning. This original practice now appears to be the exception rather than the rule in most communities. The current practice in most modern American synagogues is to hear speakers, to study in small groups or in pairs, or some combination of the two. Unlike a Passover Seder or reading the Megillah on Purim, staying up on Shavuot night is not an obligation, neither biblically nor rabbinically. It is a voluntary practice, much to be praised, but not for everyone. In fact, it's preferable that some people do sleep; the recitation of the morning blessings is complicated by not sleeping, so one who has slept typically serves as leader for that portion of the morning service. (If staying up were in fact an obligation, it is unlikely that we would ask someone to forego doing so in order to "take one for the team.")

The evening's events are typically punctuated by breaks for food and drink. As with the text for study, the fare can vary widely from community to community. Cheesecake and ice cream are common, but sushi and barbecue are also not unheard of. (Customs likewise vary as to eating meat or dairy meals on Shavuot, so one must exercise caution in his or her late-night snacking.)

Despite its superficial similarity to cramming for exams, the idea behind the Shavuot all-nighter is actually quite different. The purpose of cramming for exams is short-term and immediate: "I have a test in the morning." While perhaps effective for its intended purpose, cramming is not effective when it comes to long-term retention and internalization of the material. When it comes to Shavuot night, however, there is no test. Our goal is more profound. We seek to demonstrate our love for God and draw closer to Him through His Torah. On Shavuot morning, when we read about the revelation at Sinai and re-enact in microcosm the transmission of the Torah to the Jewish people through Moses, we have prepared ourselves, emotionally and intellectually, to appreciate the "Guidebook to Life" that God has given us. There may not be an exam and our night of study may not be graded, but it helps to direct us on a path that leads to endless credits.

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from TorahWeb torahweb@torahweb.org
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date Thu, Jun 2, 2011 at 11:51 AM
subject Rabbi Hershel Schachter - The "Giving" of the Torah

Rabbi Hershel Schachter
The TorahWeb Foundation
The "Giving" of the Torah

In our tefillos we refer to Shavuot as zman mattan Toraseinu. Hashem gave us the Torah as a gift (a mattana). When one gives someone a gift, he no longer owns it and the recipient now becomes the "ba'al haboss". When Hashem "gave" us the Torah we became the baalei-battim. The Talmud relates (Temurah 16a) that after Moshe Rabbeinu passed away, several thousand halachos were forgotten. The people approached Yehoshua, as they had always approached Moshe Rabbeinuduring the previous forty years, and requested that he ask Hashem what the correct halacha was. Yehoshua replied, "lo bashomayim hi", that the one and only navi who Hashem told halachos was Moshe Rabbeinu.

This idea is implied by the closing possuk both in Chumash Vayikra and Chumash Bamidbar. The Talmud (Megillah 2b, see Maharsha) understands the language of these pesukim to imply that only Moshe was given prophecy regarding matters ofhalacha. All other nevi'im are only told matters of hora'as sha'a (issues of a temporary nature, as opposed to halachos which are binding throughout all generations.) This is the meaning of the seventh principle of faith (in Ramabm's listing of the thirteen ikarei ha'emunah) [1]. The Zohar mentions that Moshe Rabbeinu represents Torah shebiksav, because he always received direct dictation from Hashem regarding all matters of halacha. This is why the chumash is referred to as "Toras Moshe" at the end of sefer Malachi, because everything was dictated to Moshe word for word and letter for letter[2]. Moshe is therefore called "safra rabba d'Yisroel- the great scribe of the Jewish People. All other nevi'im and talmidei chachomim must figure out on their own the halacha. The Jewish people are the ba'alei battim over the Torah! The Talmud (Bava Metziah 76a) relates that on one occasion there was a dispute between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the angels regarding a certain matter of halacha. Because the Torah had been "given" to the Jewish people, they (Hashem and the angels) felt that the question must be submitted to a rabbi who was an expert in the field for a final decision. Rabbah sided with Hakadosh Baruch Hu (this was the last halachik decision he made before his death.) The Rambam (end of Hilchos Tzora'as) has not accepted Rabbah's view, and paskens against the Rebbono Shel Olam! Isn't that odd? The Kesef Mishna explains that this is based on lo bashomayim he. The Rebbono Shel Olam himself instructed us that revelations of His will outside the context of the mesorah we were given on Har Sinai are not relevant in determining the halacha l'doros. He made us the baalei battim over the Torah, and halachik issues must be decided by human talmidei chachomim.

We are only the baalei-battim over deciding Torah matters within the bounds of the middos she'ha'Torah nidreshes bohem. Even in the area of establishing the Jewish calendar (as well as kiddush hachodesh and ibur shana) where we have a principle that atem afilu mut'im - that even if the beis din declared Rosh Chodesh in error, their psak still stands - our control is only within certain bounds: no month can

have less than twenty nine days of more than thirty days, and no year can have less than twelve or more than thirteen months. Talmidei Chachomim should be aware of the great responsibility which was placed upon them when they were tasked with determining what the halacha should be. This awareness should result in their making halachic decisions with a proper degree of seriousness.

[1] See the end of the first chapter of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's hesped for his uncle Rav Yitschok Ze'ev Soloveitchik (Divrei Hagos V'ha'aracha p. 65 - 68)

[2] This is why the rabbis derive halachos from the fact that words in the chumash are written with an extra letter or missing a letter
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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, June 3, 2011
CONVERTS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

One of the facets of the holiday of Shavuot, which is fast approaching, is the story of Ruth the Moabite woman convert as recorded in the book of Ruth and which book is read publicly in most synagogues on the Shavuot holiday. Judaism is not an "exclusive" religion in the sense that immortality and the World to Come are reserved exclusively for Jews alone. Rather Judaism clearly states that "the righteous of all peoples will also share in immortality and the World to Come."

This is unlike the beliefs and theologies of the two other monotheistic faiths that limit immortality and entry into eternal paradise exclusively to their fellow believers. Because of this basic fundamental divergence of view on the matter of one's eternal soul – paradise or damnation – there arises another fundamental disagreement regarding proselytization and conversion of others to any of the monotheistic faiths.

Both Christianity and Islam, because of the exclusivity factor of their beliefs, are forced to attempt to convert all others to their beliefs. They believe they are doing those "others" the supreme favor in converting them for now, after their conversion, they are candidates for immortality and eternal paradise. Leaving them be only dooms those unfortunates to never ending damnation.

Even forcible conversion of others, as practiced by both Christianity and Islam over long centuries, is permitted, even encouraged and deemed necessary and beneficial in the overall scheme of things. The involuntary baptism of thousands of Jewish children entrusted to Catholic institutions in Europe in World War II, in order to escape the German death machine, was seen by the Church as an act of grace and a necessary benefit to those children.

It was not seen as a gross violation of personal rights and traditional familial beliefs. That was the answer given to Chief Rabbi Herzog by Pope Pius XII when the rabbi begged the Pope, to no avail, to return those children to the Jewish people after the war ended.

Judaism as a faith does not recognize forced conversions as being necessary or even valid. In fact, to a great extent, Judaism does not search for converts. Rather it allows potential converts to search for Judaism. It never encourages outright proselytization nor is it especially welcoming initially to prospective converts.

It emphasizes to the potential convert the "downside" of being a Jew in a hostile and hateful world. It points out that the potential convert by remaining non-Jewish yet retains the immortality of one's soul

and one's share in the World to Come. This attitude is dramatically exhibited in the conversation between Naomi and Ruth where Naomi attempts to dissuade Ruth from converting to Judaism and following her back to the Land of Israel and the town of Beit Lechem.

Yet Ruth persists in her quest to join the Jewish people – “Your God is my God, your people are my people, the obligations of your Torah are my obligations as well.” And when the tenacity of Ruth's determination to convert and the sincerity of her decision become clear to Naomi, then Naomi desists from opposing her wishes and Ruth is converted to Judaism by the Jewish court in Beit Lechem. This becomes the paradigm for all of the laws of conversion to Judaism throughout the ages. Those converts who wish to become Jewish because of patently insincere motives are not welcomed for they do neither themselves nor the cause of Judaism any material benefit.

One of the main causes of the rift that led to civil war in Second Temple times between the Hasmonean kings and the rabbinic leaders was the forced conversion to Judaism by those kings of thousands of Idumean tribespeople, a conversion process that the rabbis bitterly opposed and refused to recognize as being religiously legitimate. Eventually, through the machinations of the Idumean Antipater and his descendants such as Herod, these false Jews came to power and control over the Jewish state and served their Roman masters and not their Jewish subjects. Though it is certainly current common political wisdom never to mention the elephant in the room when discussing publicly such sensitive issues as mass conversions of non-Jews to Judaism, the memory of this millennia old incident in Jewish history colors much of the debate regarding the conversion issues that we face today in modern Jewish life.

The Torah warns us thirty-six times of the respect and honor due to a convert to Judaism. It is therefore obvious that this is a matter of utmost delicacy and requires great and good judgment by all concerned and should have no place in the political horse trading of a fractious society such as ours.
Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: NASSO :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The words of the rabbis that “One who sees the shame of the woman who was unfaithful should thereupon abstain from consuming wine” are well known and oft-repeated. The obvious meaning of this message is that in life everyone must drive defensively. Let no one allow one's self to be found in compromising circumstances and to think that somehow one is immune from its consequences.

In our current world there are numerous shameful and sad examples of people in high office and great achievement who have been brought to shame and grief by the revelations of their indiscretions. The rabbis in Avot stated that there always is “an eye that sees us” – a constantly recording surveillance camera, if you will, that captures our movements and behavior.

The public revelation of another's sin should serve as a reminder to all of the consequences of that sin. The Torah that ordinarily is very protective of one's right to privacy, even the rights of a sinner, chose to publicize the fate of the unfaithful woman in order to impress upon others the necessity of care and probity in all matters of life.

One should never say that this can never happen to me. When it comes to the areas of human appetites and desires there are no automatic safeguards. Rather, only care, vigilance and avoidance of

risk and compromising situations are the unique tools of prevention readily available. Hence the clear connection that the rabbis make between witnessing sin and imbibing too much wine. Just as driving an automobile under the influence of alcohol and drugs is legally forbidden, so is life generally to be lived free those types of influences.

Addiction to alcohol was a rather rare occurrence in Jewish society over the ages. However acculturation and assimilation over the past century have made alcohol a problem in our current Jewish world. The idea of abstinence from wine as described in the parsha regarding the regimen of the nazir is meant to be taken generally as a message of moderation and good sense.

Like many other things in life, a little alcohol can be pleasurable and beneficial but a lot can be harmful and even lethal. The Torah holds up the faithless woman and the nazir as examples of the dangers that lie lurking in everyday life. It is essentially foolish for any human being to ignore these omnipresent temptations and dangers.

Again, we read in Avot that one should not trust one's self even until the final moment of life. An abundance of over-confidence in one's ability to withstand temptations of all sorts will always lead to unforeseen problems and sad consequences. All of human experience testifies to this conclusion.

Much of the modern world, including much of the current Jewish world as well, mocks and derides any type of defensive driving in personal life matters. The concept of personal freedom has morphed into a lifestyle where any restraints on personal behavior, reasonable as they may be, are attacked and derided. Well, fashions and mores may change with the times but human behavior does not and therefore the moral restraints the Torah imposes on us remain eternally valid and cogent.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
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TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Nasso For the week ending 4 June 2011 / 1 Sivan 5771 from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbors property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a kohen. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A kohen prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing G-ds Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A nazir is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The kohanim are commanded to bless the people. The Mishkan is completed and dedicated on the first day of Nisan in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each

tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the Mishkan, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

INSIGHTS

Me And My Shadow

“This is the law of the Nazir: on the day his nazirut is complete, he shall bring ‘him’ to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting” (6:13)

One of the things I’m going to have to do teshuva for again this Yom Kippur is watching the TV show, “I Love Lucy.”

Those of you who will be joining me in doing this teshuva will remember “I Love Lucy” as one of the classics of American TV comedy in the fifties and sixties.

I remember one episode where Lucy is dressed as a clown. Looking at herself in the mirror she adjusts her costume and fixes her makeup. The “mirror” is actually non-existent, and another actor pretends to be her reflection. (Could it have been Harpo Marx? Readers – please help on this one!) Her “reflection” proceeds to mimic Lucy’s every movement. The synchronicity of their movements is amazing and extremely funny.

Lucy is suspicious and constantly attempts to fool her “reflection” into making a mistake, but the “reflection” manages to move in total harmony with her. In a last attempt to expose the prankster, Lucy drops a ball she is holding. Unbeknownst to her doppelganger, the ball is attached to a string and rebounds into her hand. The ball in her “reflection’s” hand, however, bounces all over the stage. Howls of laughter. Lucy chases her “reflection” all over the set. Fade out.

“Oh wad some power the giftie gie us. To see ourselves as others see us!” wrote Scotland’s national bard Robert “Rabbie” (not Rabbi) Burns (1759-1796).

It always amazes me how transparent we are. We think that nobody sees us, that we can conceal our character flaws and blemishes. Our body language, however, our choice of words, our tone of voice, our choice of car, everything we do, reveals who we really are.

If we could see ourselves through others’ eyes, most of us would turn various colors of puce.

“This is the law of the Nazir: on the day his nazirut is complete, he shall bring ‘him’ to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.” (13:6). Rashi explains that the word ‘him’ in this verse means ‘himself’. The question remains though, why didn’t the Torah choose the normal reflexive pronoun?

A nazir is a man or a woman who adopts voluntary restrictions not to drink wine or any grape products, to refrain from trimming the hair of the head and face, and to avoid contact with a cadaver. What was the purpose of this self-imposed abstinence?

The process of nazirut was a kind of therapy to remove excesses, indulgence and self-centeredness. If this procedure was successful, the nazir was able to see himself exactly the way someone else would see him, without any of ego’s self-serving bribery.

Thus the verse tells us that if he ‘bring(s) him’, if he sees himself the way the world would see him, then “his nazirut was complete,” –the purpose of his abstinence had been successful – who he is and who he thinks he is have become identical.

He and his shadow are now one.

Sources: Based on the Meshech Chochma in Mayan shel Torah

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Nasso

A man or woman who commits any of man's sins by committing treachery toward Hashem. (5:6)

The Torah details a number of seemingly unrelated situations in which someone has sinned. First is the individual who unlawfully withholds the money of a fellow Jew through a loan, overdue wages, or outright theft and then compounds his sin by swearing falsely to support his innocence. Next is the individual who steals from a ger, convert, who has no heirs. At first glance, one questions why these unprincipled behaviors are bunched together. Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains that in order to understand the commonality that exists between these contemptible exploitations of another human being, one must fully appreciate the depth of the prohibition, "Do not steal." The reason one may not steal is not merely that taking something from another one is hurting the victim. If this were the reason, there might be circumstances in which this rationale does not apply. Suddenly, some enterprising thief might justify stealing from a wealthy man on the grounds that it would not really

create a dent in his portfolio; hence, he will experience no pain. One could rationalize stealing from a wealthy convert. After all, not only is he rich, but he has no heirs who will sustain a loss as a result of the theft. Stealing Terumah would be another area for rationalized theft, because the owner would be giving the Terumah regardless. All the thief is really doing is selecting the Kohen of his choice.

These three cases all have one thing in common: There is a concept of theft, but no real victim. Someone is stealing, but no one gets hurt. Is it punishable? It is probably not appropriate behavior, but is it sinful? Is it stealing? The Torah teaches us that it is no different from your everyday, garden variety act of stealing. Sure, one may attempt to rationalize and even justify his actions, but, he is still stealing. Stealing is ultimately not about pain; it is not about hurting someone. Stealing is a sin because the thief has taken something that Hashem had not given him. If it would have been meant for him, Hashem would have appropriated it to him. He did not. Thus, it is sinful to take it from someone else.

One should ponder whatever he has in his possession to ascertain whether it was really meant for him. Likewise, one should desire only that which Hashem bestows upon him. This refers only to those items which have come into his possession - rightfully.

With this insight into theft, we can approach the subject from a different vantage point. Stealing is a "G-d issue." While it is true that the thief causes physical and emotional pain to the victim, he is impugning Hashem's "ability" to sustain him. Sefas Emes notes that Vidui, confession - which is the foundation upon which all teshuvah, repentance, is based - is detailed in the chapter that addresses the prohibition of theft. In Bamidbar 5:7, the Torah writes, V'hisvadu es chatasam, "And they shall confess their sins." Is theft the paradigm of sin?

Sefas Emes explains that actually every sin carries with it a vestige of theft. Let us face it: Hashem grants us life and the ability to maneuver and do things. He does this for a specific purpose: so that we have the strength and ability to serve Him properly. Hence, when we channel this strength for the purpose of sinning against Hashem, we are stealing from Him. Think about it: We take what Hashem gives us and we use it against Him. Not only is this the nadir of ingratitude, but it is theft with impudence.

Theft is about breaking boundaries, breaching parameters that were set by Hashem. The entire Torah is about parameters, limitations on various areas of human endeavor. Serving Hashem bespeaks a life dedicated to obedience. An observant Jew is an obedient Jew. A thief breaches the guidelines, ignores the restrictions. Likewise, one who sins cares very little for the criterion which Hashem has established

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Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

for Jewish life. Yes, every sin contains a little bit of theft. A thief does not ponder that whatever he has G-d has given him. If he does not have it, Hashem did not give it to him. A sinner finds it difficult to accept Hashem's guidelines. He also ignores the Hashem factor in his life.

One who steals has no place before Hashem. His prayers are meaningless. Sefer Chassidim relates that a man once "took" the machzor, festival prayerbook, belonging to another Jew. After he concluded his Rosh Hashanah prayer service, he was confronted by an elderly Jew, who rebuked him. Botzea beireich ne'eitz Hashem, "He (who) breaks off a slice and blesses Hashem, angers Hashem" (Tehillim 10:3). What value is there to a prayer offered from a stolen machzor? "What shall I do now?" the man asked. "Return the machzor to its rightful owner," the elderly man said, "and ask for permission to use it, and then - pray again."

The Chafetz Chaim writes that one who steals from his fellow is not only a rasha, a wicked man, but he is also a shoteh, fool. He explains that on Rosh Hashanah Hashem decrees the exact amount of material bounty an individual will acquire during the coming year: no more; no less. One who takes from another person will ultimately have what had originally been designated for him taken away to pay back the victim. How foolish one must be to think that he can "outsmart" the Almighty. Hashem gives to whom He determines should have. If he does not have, it is because Hashem did not see fit to grant it to him. It is as simple as that.

Yalkut Me'am Loez relates a frightening story that provides much food for thought. A Torah scholar asked the Arizal for a letter of recommendation, since he was moving to another community. A letter from the Torah leader of the generation would certainly open up doors for him. The Arizal acquiesced, adding, "Go in peace, for in that community, Hashem will summon your intended wife."

The scholar took the letter and left for the community, where, as a result of the Arizal's approbation, he was accorded great honor. Shortly thereafter, one of the wealthiest leaders of the community offered his daughter to him in marriage. Along with the young lady came a dowry befitting a scholar of his stature. The marriage regrettably lasted only three months, as the young bride became ill and passed away suddenly. The widower returned to his hometown - upset, but quite wealthy. There had to be some reason that this tragedy had befallen him. Surely his rebbe could reveal an explanation. The Arizal explained the following: "You should know that the woman who you married was the gilgul, reincarnated soul, of a male friend of yours who appropriated a large sum of money from you. It was decreed that his neshamah return to this world to afford you three months of wedded bliss as retribution for the pain which you sustained. In addition, you inherited all of 'his' possessions to make up for your earlier losses."

When the talmidim, students, of the Arizal heard this, they cited the pasuk in Yirmiyah (32:19), "Great in counsel and mighty in deed, Your eyes are cognizant to all the ways of mankind, to grant each man according to his ways and the consequences of his deeds." Hashem repays everyone measure for measure, commensurate with his actions. No one is absolved. Everyone pays. Frightening.

If any man's wife goes astray and acts treacherously toward him. (5:12)

Rashi notes the preceding pasuk, "A man's sacred objects shall be his." This is a reference to the Priestly gifts that every Jew is mandated to give. Rashi posits that if one withholds the Kohen's gifts, he will ultimately pay for this infraction by having to visit the Kohen with his wayward wife. This is a very strong punishment. Because a man withheld his Priestly gifts, he should lose his wife in such a tragic manner? Should his family be torn apart simply because

he withheld the gifts due to the Kohen? How are we to understand this?

A husband's relationship with his wife should be one of mutual respect and, of course, love. When the husband acts inappropriately: when he cheats others; when he lies and looks for excuses to justify not paying his due to the Kohen; when he conjures up stories to validate his refusal to give tzedakah, charity, does he think that he fools his wife? Once, twice, three times - a woman who sees her husband acting in such a manner invariably loses respect for him. Once the respect is lost, anything can happen.

All too often, we hear about an individual who has acted in a manner unbecoming a Torah Jew. Are we to believe that this does not have an effect on his family? One might succeed in fooling the community, but, unless his wife is a total fool or totally subservient, he does not fool her. Thus, the Jew who wanted to save a few dollars by cheating the Kohen out of his due has perhaps gained a few dollars.

Regrettably, he has destroyed his marriage. After all, what kind of woman would respect such a man? Clearly, this does not justify her actions. The husband, however, should think twice before absolving himself from all guilt. His miscreant actions have played a role in catalyzing his wife's abhorrent behavior.

What if the woman had been wrongly accused? The Torah writes (ibid 28), "But if the woman was not defiled and she is pure, she will be cleared and shall bear seed." In other words, if the woman endured the humiliation that came with the degradation of being labeled as a suspected sotah, and she was rendered innocent, she will be blessed with seed. Rashi explains that if, in the past, she had suffered during childbirth, her labor would now be painless. If she had, in the past, given birth to swarthy babies, they would now be light. In other words, the wrongly accused are vindicated with a blessing. Why? It is not as if this woman had maintained herself on a pristine level of moral rectitude. There is a reason that her husband had suspected her of infidelity. Perhaps he was too quick to assume, too fast to blame, but, he was not responding randomly. She had been meeting secretly with a man she was warned to stay away. Yet, she acted in a manner which is inappropriate for an observant Jewish woman. Is she to be rewarded for her indiscretion? Is she to be blessed because she did not consummate her act of infidelity?

The Chasam Sofer zl, explains that the shame which this woman has sustained as a result of being labeled a suspected sotah suffices to cleanse her of any punishment she might deserve. Humiliation cleanses; embarrassment is a powerful catharsis. She has had her atonement. Life now goes on.

This concept should send a shudder up one's spine. A woman whose moral posture is, at best, questionable, has acted inappropriately - yet not in as vile a manner as she had been suspected of acting - is concomitantly blessed, because of the humiliation she has endured. We seem to have no problem embarrassing others. It happens all of the time. Perhaps it is not with malice, but rather, without thought. We say something thoughtless, but the hurt has been caused. Someone has been shamed. If we realize that shame has such an incredible exonerating effect, we would realize how absolutely hurtful it must be. It's a consequence we might think a little more about before we act.

A man or woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem. (6:2)

One would think that the daily occurrences in the lives of the members of the secular society that surrounds us have no effect on our mindset. After all, what relationship does an observant Jew have to the base society in which he lives? Clearly, the moral bankruptcy, perversion and hedonism that has become the standard of living for much of the entertainment, media and political arenas are as far

removed from us as the constellations in outer space. Well, that is the way it should be. Chazal apparently have a different take on the matter. Upon noting the Torah's juxtaposition of the laws of nazir upon the laws concerning the sotah, wayward wife, Chazal derive that anyone who sees a wayward wife in her degradation should prohibit himself from drinking wine by taking a Nazirite vow. Chazal's choice of vernacular, kol ha'roah, "anyone who sees" indicates that the effect of seeing a sotah in her humiliation can be deleterious for anyone - even the greatest and most devout individual. In addition, a simple adjustment in his spiritual lifestyle will not suffice. He must go to the limit - become a nazir. Does this not seem a bit extreme?

Apparently not. This is exactly how the yetzer hora, evil inclination, works. When we begin to believe that it cannot happen to us, that we are on a higher spiritual plane, then the yetzer hora has already succeeded in deluding us. We have just fallen into its net of guile. Chazal say "anyone" - this means "you" - regardless of where you might be on the spiritual totem pole. The higher one is, the more the yetzer hora seeks to "initiate" him.

In addition, once one has "subtly" been impacted by the effect of the sotah's degradation, he might think that reciting an extra kapitol, chapter, of Tehillim, learning another blatt, page of Gemorah will do the trick. It will wipe the slate clean and remove the harmful exposure. Chazal say no! It is not enough. One must go to the polar extreme and accept a Nazirite vow. It is not enough simply to strengthen one's observance. He must be extreme and undertake to live a lifestyle to which he has never aspired and has never been accustomed. All of this because he "happened" to notice an event that "might" leave a negative taste in his mind.

The act perpetrated by the sotah affects more than herself and her immediate family. It is an incursion against the very fabric of Klal Yisrael. Morality is one of the principles upon which our nation is founded. It is one of the things which distinguishes us from the rest of the world. Indeed, the first time the name Yisrael is used in the Torah in reference to the Jewish People is following the violation of Dinah. The Torah writes, Ki nevalah assa b'Yisrael, "For he had committed an outrage in Yisrael" (Bereishis 34:7). This woman has breached the Jewish code of morality. Her actions are an outrage against the entire nation. Every member of Klal Yisrael is hurt by her actions. We do not live in a vacuum. By her immoral activity, this woman has changed the rules, thereby demeaning and degrading the entire Jewish nation. By impugning the Jewish concept of married life, she has attacked the foundation of our people. Her act of indiscretion was an assault on each and every one of us.

The first time a terrible event occurs, it shakes us up. People talk about it for months. The media is filled with op-eds decrying the act of terror, etc. - until the next time. We are no longer shaken up as much. It is reported; it is written up; every aspiring politician renders his most brilliant commentary - until the next time. It no longer garners as much publicity, because, regrettably, it is no longer an outrage. It has become an accepted fact of life. It is no longer an act of terror. It is what freedom fighters do.

The sotah committed an outrage - the first time. It is no longer an outrage when it happens again. This is why we must use extreme measures to underscore her degradation. The next time it happens, the effect will not be as crushing.

A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem. (6:2)

Chazal teach us that one who sees a sotah amidst her degradation should accept upon himself a Nazirite vow. Would it not be sufficient to simply make an oath to no longer drink wine? Why demand that he go to the extreme? One who vows to abstain from wine might find it difficult to maintain his commitment. One who vows to become a

nazir has to transform his entire lifestyle and - more or less - become a new person. Included in the various prohibitions which he now takes upon himself is abstinence from wine. He is more likely to adhere to this vow.

In order to break a bad habit, one must cut himself off completely from the possibility of failure. Many of us have, at one time or another, attempted to swear off certain vices, only to go back to them the very next day. The reason is simple: they are accessible. In order to detach oneself successfully from something, it must be rendered inaccessible to him. Without a major change in one's lifestyle, success is, at best, limited.

Nazirus creates a physical change in a person. He no longer looks the same, and he cannot frequent the places he would have visited in his "previous" life. He has burnt his bridges. Had he simply sworn off wine, he would still fall under the influence of his friends - who did not swear off wine. Taking that extra step ensures him of the protection he needs in order to navigate the teshuvah, repentance, process successfully. In order to maintain one's distinctiveness, he must distinguish himself from the life he has lived until now.

This brings us to a "situation" which requires understanding on the part of those who come in contact with baalei teshuvah, those who have altered their lifestyle and assumed a life of Torah observance. We often ignore the sacrifice the baal teshuvah must make to adapt to a brand new lifestyle. His old friends often shun him. The old haunts that he had frequented no longer welcome him - nor does he want to go there. He has to endure many inconveniences. One sacrifice, however, supersedes the rest, and can cause great pain and, for some, even generate second thoughts: family.

The baal teshuvah often sacrifices his relationship with his family. While the relationship may not necessarily be totally severed, it often becomes tenuous and confrontational, rarely supportive. This creates a stressful mindset for the baal teshuvah as he walks the tightrope between past and present. Juggling emotions, often having to contend with a lose-lose situation, plays havoc with one's mind. At the same time, he is making every attempt to acclimate to a lifestyle that, by its very nature, is sheltered and selective in terms of who "makes it." It would serve us well to be more understanding of the multi-faceted sacrifices involved in the teshuvah process and respectful of the individuals who make those sacrifices.

The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nachshon ben Aminadov, of the Tribe of Yehudah. (7:12)

Just plain "Nachshon ben Aminadav of the Tribe of Yehudah." There is no mention of his title, Nasi, the Prince of the Tribe, as it is listed when the other Nesiim are mentioned. Why does the Torah not accord Nachshon, the first Nasi, the same distinction that each of the other Nesiim received? The Kli Yakar offers a most meaningful explanation. The previous chapter concluded with the blessing of peace, as the addendum to the Bircas Kohanim, Priestly Blessing. This is probably the greatest blessing, for, without peace, among Jews, we really can have no blessing. The scourge of dispute has - and continues to destroy - relationships, families and entire communities.

The Nesiim exemplified peace and harmony. They not only lived in peaceful coexistence with one another, but each of them also went out of his way to promote harmony in his respective community. Obviously, this did not just happen. Peace is a process in which both parties work toward a common goal of unity. The question which confronts us is one of a practical nature. The Nesiim clearly all had great relationships with everybody. In a utopian society, this is the way it should be. Regrettably, we do not live in a perfect world. Envy is a part of human nature. Jealousy is a fact of life. How was it that none of the Nesiim was envious of Nachshon? Being selected to be the first to represent Klal Yisrael in the Chanukas HaMishkan,

Inauguration of the Mishkan, is no small feat. This was truly a proud moment for Nachshon. Was no one jealous of him?

Chazal teach us that the twelve shevatim, tribes, coincide with the twelve mazalos, zodiac signs. As the mazalos are arranged in a circular manner, there is no beginning and no end. One follows the other in a circle. There is neither a first shevet, nor is there a last one. Indeed, the one who seems to be first is actually the continuation of the last one who was before him in the circle.

This idea is alluded to in the pasuk which refers to Nachshon's offering as v'korbano, "and his sacrifice." If he was viewed as the first, it would grammatically be incorrect to prefix his sacrifice with a vov, implying "and," as if it were following the previous korban. His korban was not a commencement - it was a continuation. In order to prevent Nachshon from entertaining any visions of grandeur, the Torah withholds the title Nasi from his name. This guarantees the reign of peace and harmony among the tribes.

Creating peace among people is an impressive goal. There is, however, an even more impressive goal: engendering peace between people and Hashem. Some individuals have taanos, complaints, about life in general, as well as their specific personal circumstances.

Bitterness has become a way of life for them; negativity is the predominant mode in which they view what occurs around them. Nobody is perfect, but some of us seem to have the habit of searching for, and revealing the adverse in every situation. Such a person is not at peace. As a result of his personal bitterness, he ends up harboring feelings of discontent against Hashem. While such feelings are unfounded and foolish, it does allow the individual to feel better as long as he has someone to blame. Thus, rodef shalom, pursuing peace, takes on a new image when it concerns Hashem. The rodef shalom attempts to create a balance, a sense of harmony between man and Hashem.

How does one deal with a bitter person? Rebbetzin Elyashiv, a.h, was well-known for her ability to "listen," to understand what had provoked an individual's bitterness, the source of pain, the underlying reason for the complaint. Her love for every Jew was legendary. It was not unusual to see her crying bitterly following a "listening" session with one of the many women who poured out their hearts to her. Her chesed, acts of loving-kindness, were boundless. This was evidenced when, shortly after her marriage, her revered in-laws moved in with the young couple. Rebbetzin Elyashiv attended to the needs of her in-laws for the next twenty-five years, with dignity, love and reverence.

It is all about one's ability to listen. Feeling understood is a basic need for human beings. This need becomes even more crucial in times of need or during a crisis. Many of us have occasion to come in contact with someone who is down and out. All he or she needs is to talk. Our function is to listen reflectively. Solutions are not necessary, since most of the time the person is not seeking a solution. He just wants someone to listen to him.

Va'ani Tefillah

V'alu moshiim be'Har Tzion lishpot es har Eisav.

And saviors will ascend Har Tzion to judge the mountain of Eisav.

Why is the "mountain" of Eisav emphasized? They should be judging Eisav - not his mountain. The Bnei Yissachar explains that our arch enemy, Eisav, has had a hand in every galus, exile, in which we have suffered. Whether it was overtly, or concealed in the background, Eisav was present. Therefore, Eisav is included in galus: Bavel, Yavan, Madai, Edom. If one tallies up the gematriah, numerical equivalent, of these four countries, it equals 205 - or har, mountain. Thus, "Har Eisav" is a reference to Eisav's involvement in every galus.

Perhaps, we may suggest that "har" represents dominion. One's "mountain" is his sanctuary, his possession, his strength, his power. Har Eisav is a reference to Eisav's far-reaching power. As long as Eisav has any power in the world, any influence whatsoever, the Throne of Hashem will be incomplete. The "mountain" must go! Sponsored l'in R' Alter Chaim Dovid ben R' Menachem Shmuel z"l niftar 28 Iyar 5767 t.n.tz.v.h. from Menachem Shmuel and Roiza Devora Solomon . In memory of Mr. David Salamon z"l

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Rabbi Weinreb's Torah Column, Parshat Naso

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Person in the Parsha

Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h
Can Chayn Mean "Charisma"?

I once loved the word. I first heard it when I was introduced to the thought of German sociologist Max Weber. He differentiated between several types of leaders, one of whom had neither specialized expertise nor royal birth, but whose authority rested on the devotion instilled in his followers by the force of his personality. He termed that force of personality "charisma," and he wrote eloquently of the power of charisma and of the great danger charismatic leaders posed to society.

Ever since then, I have been fascinated by this quality of charisma and have studied the lives of charismatic leaders. In the Bible, Abraham and King David clearly had charisma; Isaac and King Saul, much less so. Closer to our day, both Churchill and Hitler had it, proving that it can equally be used for good and for evil. Harry Truman and Hubert Humphrey, two politicians I admired back in high school, did not have it. And Jack Kennedy had it in spades! What is charisma? Dictionary definitions include "a rare personal quality attributed to leaders who arouse popular devotion," or more simply, "personal magnetism or charm." The word also has a religious connotation, because it stems from the Greek word kharisma (divine favor), so that in Christianity, it specifically refers to the "ability to perform miracles, granted by the Holy Spirit." In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Naso, we come across a word which, I will argue, can well be translated as "charisma." That word is chayn, spelled chet-nun, and it appears in the second verse of the well-known Priestly Blessing, which reads, "May the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee." (Numbers 6:25) That last phrase, which is the typical translation of vichuneka, is not favored by Rashi. Rather, he renders it, "...and He shall grant you chayn" - the quality of grace, of charm, and as I maintain, of charisma.

Charisma in the sense of grace is mentioned elsewhere in the Torah as a divine gift. In Exodus 33:19, we come across a somewhat mysterious passage in which God says, "I will bestow chayn upon whomever I bestow chayn." It is almost as if He, somewhat arbitrarily from our human perspective, gives the gift of grace, charm, or charisma to whomever He chooses to give it. This is certainly the implication of the verse, "And Noah found chayn in the eyes of the Lord." (Genesis 6:8).

We have all encountered individuals in our own lives who seem to have been blessed with the gift of chayn/charisma. In every high school class, and certainly in my own, there was one fellow who had it. He was the most popular among his peers, excelled academically, and usually had great athletic prowess as well. He was the one chosen by his classmates as "most likely to succeed."

But is chayn always a blessing? Is charisma always a positive virtue? Apparently not, for already in Scripture, we find it referred to in negative terms. "Chayn is deceptive (sheker hachayn), and beauty is illusory," reads the verse in Proverbs 31:30, a verse we melodiously recite at the Sabbath table every Friday evening.

When I think back to the charismatic youngsters of my high school class and the one preceding it, I cannot help but reflect on their ultimate destinies. One struggled with alcoholism all of his adult life, constantly frustrated because he felt he was not living up to his potential. He died the premature death of a derelict on a New York City skid row. The other settled into a mediocre bureaucratic career, neurotically fearful to use his very real talents lest he be outshone by others.

Furthermore, the gift of charisma is often abused. Tyrants too numerous to mention have used their charisma for supreme evil. Adolf Hitler is but the most obvious case in point.

Religious leaders as well have all too frequently used their charismatic qualities for fiendish ends. The list of gurus and clergymen who have been guilty of perverse treatment of their followers or even their own children is a shamefully long one. Sadly, it includes spiritual leaders in our own community who have abused their devotees and disciples in vile manners.

The Talmud knows of a different kind of charisma entirely, one that is more common and may be even be considered the force which makes for cohesive relationships and societies. Substitute the word "charisma" or "charm" for the word "chayn" in this Talmudic passage:

"Rabbi Yochanan said:

There are three kinds of chayn:

The chayn a city has for those who dwell in it;

The chayn a wife has in the eyes of her husband;

The chayn an object holds for him who purchased it."

(Sotah 47a)

Although I was born and bred in Brooklyn, I have lived most of my life in the city of Baltimore. It has charisma; enough so that for me it merits its claim to be "Charm City."

My wife radiates charisma to me -- as I hope your spouse does to you, dear reader -- in the sense of charm and dignity and grace.

And who does not recall fondly that old "lemon" of an automobile which he or she purchased way back when? We react to the image of that jalopy with nostalgic and sentimental memories of its charm and charisma.

So the next time you hear the blessing "May the Lord shine His face upon you and grant you chayn," think of the kind of charisma you personally hope for, and make sure that if you get it, you use it for a blessed purpose.

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The Nazir: Live in Moderation

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran (Israelnationalnews.com)

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The Nazir's sin is that he cannot live with moderation. He cannot live within the norm. He can find peace only in the extreme. For this he is condemned and must seek atonement.

The Nazir suffers existential angst. He is a man of a certain faith, one which rockets between extremes -- from ecstasy in God's closeness and utter despair whenever he senses God's distance.

Despite his passionate faith and desire for a relationship with God, he is alone. In his "aloneness" he shines a light on the Jewish experience, which is to seek a spiritual life while living in the secular; to reach for the spirit even as we wrestle with the flesh.

For the soul struggling for spirituality while existing in the unrelenting secularity of the world, the route of the Nazir must be seductive indeed; how wonderful the possibility of withdrawal from the impersonal, profane, and pleasure-seeking world!

The Nazir seeks for a thirty- day period to be apart, to abstain from wine, from contact with the dead, from even the most mundane acknowledgement of physicality. The Nazir desires to be completely "holy unto the Lord."

And, as S. R. Hirsch explains, the Nazir wants to do this "...without retiring from actual contact with the social life around him, to work on himself, spiritually and mentally for the time of his vow of Naziritism to be more by himself with God, His Sanctuary, and His teachings." The Nazir is no hermit. His is an isolation of the mind and spirit, in the midst of an active and ordinary life. He avoids alcohol and anything remotely derived from wine to preserve an undisturbed clarity of mind and the unexcited tranquility of disposition to mold new and positive thoughts and feelings. He intentionally allows his hair to grow, expressing his intention to withdraw into isolation, to hide and cut off the outside world. He refuses any contact with death, with mortality, with the finality of life -- so that he can regain meaning, goals, and aspirations in life.

Who can question the Nazir's lofty intentions? Holiness is a divine goal. Our question does not challenge his purpose; it is undoubtedly positive. No, our pressing question is whether the Torah favors or criticizes the Nazir? Are we to laud the one who seeks to separate himself to find life's meaning, or are we to insist that one can find real meaning through the vehicle of Torah's 613 mitzvot?

Indeed, for every action the Nazir takes to distance himself from his secular existence, Jewish life and culture find holiness in its embrace. The Nazir refuses wine. Yet, wine is central to every major event and occasion of the Jewish life-cycle. Sabbath, Yom Tov, birth, marriage, and every seudat mitzvah are consecrated with a kos shel b'racha of wine.

As to confronting death, our consciousness tells us that all that is born dies. We cannot separate ourselves from death. It is intrinsic to what it means to be alive. We cannot separate ourselves from it and so, when confronted with the reality of the end we declare, "Blessed art Thou -- Dayan Ha'Emet."

As to our hair... only the individual in the state of mourning allows the hair to grow, for indeed the mourner finds himself in the unnatural state of bereavement, turning away from the world around him and seeking shelter and solace in his own "world." Otherwise, Halachah ordains that prior to the onset of Sabbath and Yom Tov we should cut, and particularly groom, our hair. Furthermore, Halachah teaches that hair not be allowed to grow too long, lest it interfere with the proper donning of the head tefillin.

Clearly, in the very instances of his distancing himself from the secularity of life, the Nazir finds himself opposed to the normative Torah practice of life. So, while he is recognized as a kadosh, his sins are also explicitly referred to in the Parasha: "And the priest shall offer one for a sin-offering and one for a burnt-offering and make an atonement for him" (6:11). When his days of separation are over, he has to bring his sacrifices to the entrance of the Tent, and again we are taught: "and he shall offer his offering . . . for a sin offering" (6:14).

Are the Nazir's methods and actions commended or condemned? If they are commended, why have him offer a sin-offering? If they are condemned, why refer to him as "holy"? The Ramban held that the Nazir is completely and genuinely holy. Indeed, he should "always

continue to live a life of holiness and separation to God." In Ramban's view, the Torah requires him to offer a sin-offering precisely because he returns to the world of defilement and passions. "Now that he returns to defile himself with worldly passions, he requires atonement."

Abstinence is the renunciation of everything that disturbs one from the service of God. Implicit in abstinence is holding this world in abhorrence and curtailing desires. The very world that God declared to be "good."

Bachya believes that as wealth, power, and worldly goods multiply, so too does the need for asceticism.

Perishut is an attitude to live by, not necessarily a way of life to live with. It is a personal, not a universal, goal. So too Nezirut is a personal and temporary goal, to be used when necessary. It is not a rule to be imposed upon the community. It is not Torah.

The Rama notes that "the Nazir was only commanded to abstain in order to achieve a good purpose, the attainment of the middle way," which he was not able to achieve through the normative methods suggested by Torah.

Rambam makes this perfectly clear after establishing the well-known approach of moderation—the *mida beinonit*, namely, that "the right way is the mean in each group of dispositions common to humanity; namely, that disposition which is equally distant from the two extremes in its class, not being nearer to the one than to the other" (Deut 1:4), and that "we are bidden to walk in the middle paths, which are the right and proper ways."

Rambam suggests that life always be governed by the *mida beinonit*: "Let him practice again and again the actions prompted by those dispositions which are the mean between the extremes, and repeat them continually till they become easy and are no longer irksome to him, and so the corresponding dispositions will become a fixed part of his character" (Deut 1:7).

That being the standard, it is clear why the Rambam (Deut 3:1) criticizes the insecure individual who claims that, "since envy, cupidity, and ambition are evil qualities to cultivate and lead to man's ruin, I will avoid them to the uttermost, and seek their contraries," and therefore concludes that he will not eat meat, or drink wine, or marry or dwell in a decent home, or wear comely apparel." For this separatist and ascetic the Rambam has only condemnation: "Whoever persists in such a course is termed a sinner."

Of the Nazir, it is said, "He shall make atonement for him, for the sin that he committed against the soul." On this text, the Sages comment, "If the Nazir, who only abstained from wine, stands in need of an atonement, how much more so one who deprives himself of all legitimate enjoyment." The Sages accordingly enjoined us that we should only refrain from that which the Torah has expressly withdrawn from our use. Do not the prohibitions of the Torah suffice? Why add others?

The Torah system of mitzvot is sufficient to guide and govern a normal life which includes the full enjoyment of the world which God created for our benefit, pleasure of the flesh which He provided, and satisfaction from the foods, drinks, and nature which He placed at our disposal. Otherwise, we sin, just as the Nazir sins by denying himself the enjoyment of wine.

Ultimately, the Nazir's sin is that he cannot live with moderation. He cannot live within the norm. He can find peace only in the extreme. For this he is condemned and must seek atonement. "This," says the Rama, "is because the abstention of the Nazir is evil in itself, since all extremes are bad." For seeking meaning in life and attempting to make sense out of a chaotic, senseless, and impersonal society he is commended; he is termed a *kadosh*. For doing so by seeking to escape that very same society, he is a sinner.

The Nazir embodies the search for truth, peace, integrity, and faith. Along his path, he may even have to abandon the very principles and behaviors that govern the life he seeks. That is unfortunate, and because of this he will have to offer a sin-offering; for the search for moderation is the ultimate struggle in the search for meaning. Life is the struggle to reconcile the fundamental contradiction inherent in possessing a divine soul in a body of clay. Such reconciliation demands "everything in moderation"; it demands finding the middle path between Nazir the sinner and Nazir the holy. www.IsraelNationalNews.com © Copyright IsraelNationalNews.com

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org & genesis@torah.org
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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Nasso

"Your Money Or Your Wife?" and Other Such Life Decisions

Parshas Nasso contains the Parsha of Sotah, the suspected adulteress [starting with Bamidbar 5:11]. Rashi comments on the adjacency of this section to the preceding passage: "A man's holies shall be his and what a man gives to the Kohen, it shall be his." Rashi explains the connection as follows: If you withhold the gifts of the Kohen, I swear by your life that you will need to come to him to bring him (your wife) the sotah. In other words, if a person does not visit the Kohen to give him what is his due, the person will inevitably have to visit the Kohen for another reason -- to have him carry out the ritual of the suspected adulteress.

The Medrash Rabbah comments in a similar vein, if one does not pay the poor who come to his house to ask for support, he will wind up having to pay that same money to the doctor (for medical expenses for himself or family members). This is a very scary thought. When the Almighty gives us money, we are supposed to perform mitzvos with the money -- *tzedakah*, *chesed* [charity, kindness]. We have the choice and opportunity to use the money that we are given properly; however if we do not use it properly, the Medrash says that we will wind up using it to pay doctors' bills.

The sefer *Lulei Sorascha* records many episodes from the life of Rav Shach, zt"l. Usually, when I read such stories, the names mentioned do not mean anything to me. However, I recently came across a story mentioning someone that I know well. This is a person, several years older than me, whom I grew up knowing in Seattle, Washington. The person's name is Rav Tzvi Genauer. He is a very distinguished individual, who has been living in Eretz Yisrael for many decades now.

What is the story? A person came into Rav Schach and gave him \$5000 with the instructions that he could do whatever he wanted with money. He could give it to whomever he felt needed it. It was not every day that someone walked into the Rosh Yeshiva's office and dropped \$5000. Rav Schach inquired regarding the source of the money. The person who brought the money told the following story: Rav Tzvi Genauer needed an eye operation. He wanted a certain doctor to perform the surgery. In Israel, they have government-funded socialized medicine (*Kupat Cholim*). Apparently, a person cannot choose his doctor, but rather, must go wherever the system sends him for his medical needs. [This is probably equivalent to our experience regarding "Is this doctor part of your insurance plan or is he not part of the plan?"] So Rav Genauer went to a person who had "protezia" in the system. The person was able to pull some strings for Rav Genauer, such that he had his surgery done by his preferred

ophthalmologist. Kupat Cholim paid the full price of the surgery -- \$5000.

As a token of appreciation to this intermediary who was able to get him into his preferred doctor, Rav Genauer gave him \$100 for the charity of his choice and thanked him for arranging the operation for him. He came home and proudly told his wife that as Hakaras Hatov, he gave the man who pulled the strings for him \$100.

Mrs. Genauer said, "You only gave him \$100? You should have given him \$5000! His intervention saved you \$5000 in out of pocket expenses that you would have been willing to pay to have the surgery done by Dr. so-and-so." Rav Genauer thought about it and said, "You're right!" He went back to the intermediary and told him "Here is \$5000. This is the money that I would have had to pay out. You saved me from having to pay it out. Now that you saved me from paying it out, I want it to go to tzedakah."

This is a reverse form of the choice alluded to by the Medrash. Either we can give the charity to the poor or we will have to give it out one way or another. Knowing of this choice, we would all much rather give our money to the poor than to doctors.

Nezirus: You Do Not Need To Be Young To Think Young

Following the laws of Sotah, the Torah presents the laws of Nazir. The Nazir has certain restrictions that are equivalent to those of the Kohen Gadol [High Priest]. The Kohen Gadol may not spiritually defile himself through contact with the dead. Regular Kohanim are also not allowed to become tameh mes through corpse contact, however they are allowed to attend the funerals of close relatives, becoming tameh mes if Heaven Forbid they are confronted with the loss of a parent, sibling, or child. The Torah specifically disallows the Kohen Gadol from becoming tameh, even from deceased members of his immediate family.

The Nazir has the same basic halacha as the Kohen Gadol in this regard. However, it is interesting to note that when the Torah specifies the relatives from whom the Nazir may not defile himself, it only mentions "his father and mother; his brother and his sister" [Bamidbar 6:7]. When the Torah spells out the relatives for whom a regular Kohen may become tameh, in addition to father, mother, brother, sister, the Torah also mentions "son and daughter". It is noteworthy that "son and daughter" are not mentioned by Nazir (even though he may not in fact come in contact with them either, in the unfortunate situation that they die while he is a Nazir). Why would this be?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, in his sefer Emes l'Yaakov, advances a novel theory: Normally, the only people who became Nazirites amongst the Jewish people were unmarried young men. He supports this idea from a pasuk in Amos [2:11] where the prophet complains, "your sons (bneichem) could have become prophets and your unmarried young men (bachureichem) Nazirites..." The Ramban alludes to the same idea that unmarried men used to become Nazirites. There are also certain sources that quote an ancient Jewish custom not to make birthday parties for young men, but to celebrate their birthdays by training them to achieve spiritual heights through practicing Nezirus. The Gemara in Nedarim also relates the story of a single young man who came to a pond and saw his handsome reflection in the water. Seeing his beautiful hair, he felt that his evil inclination might overcome him so he vowed to become a Nazir. This incident too involved a bachur.

The common denominator of all these sources is that, in practice, the observance of the Nazir laws seems largely limited to single young men.

Rav Yaakov suggests why this might be so. The Gemara suggests that a person will be inspired to proclaim himself a Nazir when he sees the amazing sight of a Sotah being shamed for her indiscretions. This

motivates a person to change his life and abstain from wine. Rav Yaakov deduces from this Gemara that Nezirus is all about changing. Normally, young people are amenable to change. As we get older, it becomes harder to change ourselves. Young people may become motivated to change their lives and they do something about it. The older we get, the more tolerant we become of our weaknesses and shortcomings, the less we try to improve ourselves.

This, Rav Yaakov says, is why generally the single young men became Nazirim. They are young and idealistic and are ready to change. This is why there is no need for the Torah to mention the scenario of becoming tameh to their deceased sons or daughters. As a general rule, (and the Torah speaks often of the general case), the Nazir would be unmarried and not have a son or a daughter!

I hesitated long and hard before quoting this insight of Rav Yaakov that only the young are idealistic enough to try to improve themselves through the proclamation of Nezirus. What does that say for the rest of us? We do not want to give the impression that life -- in terms of spiritual improvement -- is over at 25 or at 30. That is certainly not the point I am trying to get across.

I am just saying that the reality is that young people are much more amenable to change. We must try to emulate the young in this respect. The Torah says, "Do not set up for yourself a statue that the L-rd your G-d hates." [Devarim 16:22] The simple interpretation of the pasuk refers to idolatry. However, homiletically, the words "Lo Takim lecha matzevah" may be translated "Do not make yourself into a matzevah (a solid piece of stone) that the L-rd your G-d hates." There is no growth to a piece of stone. It is what it is and always remains at the same level. The Almighty, who desires constant spiritual growth, hates such static spirituality.

Whether we are 30, 40, 60, or 70, this is not the time for matzevahs [tombstones]. A matzevah is for after we die. When we are still alive, we should use the time to grow and improve ourselves spiritually. We live in a generation in which Baalei Teshuvah can inspire us. We see people who even later in their lives -- in their 40s, 50s, and 70s -- become different people spiritually than they had been in their earlier years. What does that tell us? Of course, it is easier to change when one is younger, but the Baalei Teshuvah phenomenon proves to us that we in our middle years or beyond can indeed change ourselves, perhaps dramatically. It may be harder for us than when we were young, but we can do it.

Like the young man who sees the Sotah in her moment of disgrace, we constantly see things around us that should motivate us to take upon ourselves life style changes that will protect us from the spiritually corrosive environment that surrounds us. We see things that should inspire us. Our reaction should not just be a shrug of the shoulders with life continuing as usual.

The pasuk says, "For Israel is a naar [young lad] and I love him." [Hoshea 11:1] The Almighty praises Israel because he is child-like. What does that mean? It means our spiritual capacity is one of youth. The Torah also praises Yehoshua [Joshua] in this way -- he was a "naar" who did not depart from his master's tent. [Shmos 31:11] He was not 13 years old at that time, but this remained a character trait of his well into his adult life and beyond. He had the capacity of youth. As Douglas McArthur once said "Youth is not a time of life, it is a state of mind." We are as young as we think we are. At 15, some people have the attitudes of old men. However, there are people that are young of heart and young of mind at age 50 and beyond. The lesson of Nezirus is that man can change himself. We should not think that this applies only to youngsters.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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A Thought for the Week with Rabbi Jay Kelman Shavuot

The holiday of Shavuot is a much neglected holiday. It lasts only one day (two in the Diaspora) comes just as the summer is arriving and unlike our other holidays has no rituals associated with it. No shofar, matza or sukkah. The Torah itself makes no mention of any historical event associated with the holiday. Rather it describes how seven weeks after pesach "you may present a new grain as a meal offering to G-d" (Leviticus 23:15). Of course from an agricultural perspective we readily understand why Shavuot coming in the midst of the farming season was only one day. Summer is no time for a farmer to take a vacation. However in the midst of busy season we do need to remind ourselves that though we may work hard ultimately our blessings do emanate from G-d. And no one understands this better than a farmer who knows that regardless of his toil, if nature does not cooperate his work will literally bear no fruit.

Even though we all "know" that Shavuot is when we received the Torah, the Torah itself makes no mention of this "fact", not in parshat Yitro where the events of the Sinai are described nor in parshat Emor where the Torah lists the five Biblical holidays. In fact the Talmud posits that the Torah may have in actuality been given on the seventh day of Sivan. Furthermore even if Shavuot was the day we received the torah there seems to be little reason to celebrate. A scant forty days later the Jews were busy dancing around a golden calf and the Torah they had so recently accepted was shattered in pieces before them. The Torah that we have was actually received on Yom Kippur, following the successful pleas of Moshe Rabbeinu for forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people. The Talmud therefore tells us that Yom Kippur is meant to be a day of celebration, a celebration of the receiving of the Torah and an opportunity to renew our covenantal relationship with G-d. Secondly the Talmud relates that contrary to popular notion, the Jews had to be coerced into accepting the Torah with G-d "lifting the mountain" over the heads of the Jewish people and telling them you don't have to accept the Torah, but if you don't this will be your burial place. Some choice. The Talmud tells us that one could have a valid argument to justify our neglect of Torah as a coerced contract is not enforceable in Jewish law. It was only on Purim that we Jews actually willingly accepted the Torah. So surely Shavuot is no time to celebrate our receiving the Torah.

Yet notwithstanding the above Shavuot is known as zman matan Torateinu. And the one custom we do have is to stay up all night learning showing to accept this wonderful gift. Perhaps we can understand this dilemma by carefully analyzing the phrase zman matan Torateinu, the time of receiving of our Torah. Is it not the Torah of G-d that we accepted? The Torah may have been given by G-d but it is our Torah. We are its protectors and interpreters. "Lo Bashamyim hee" Torah is not in heaven. It is meant for observance here on earth and therefore the Rabbis can even "overrule" G-d provided their arguments are based on the divine principles enunciated in the Torah. It is the rabbis interpretation that counts, not the heavenly one. Shavuot provides a classic example to the power of rabbinic interpretation. The Torah tells us that Shavuot is to be observed 50 days "from the morrow after the Shabbat" following pesach. Apparently the count of the omer is to begin on the first Saturday night following pesach (somewhat akin to selichot which always begin on a Saturday night) with Shavuot falling exactly seven weeks later. This is how the Zedukim and later the Kaarites interpreted the verse and thus they celebrated Shavuot on Sunday year after year (it made for a nice long weekend). Though their interpretation appears to be the simple meaning of the Torah,

Rabbinic interpretation insisted that the shabbat in this context refers to passover and hence the omer counts begins on the second day of passover. Even the observance of two days of Shavuot in the diaspora should not apply on Shavuot. The length of time it took for the news of the declaration of the new moon to reach the diaspora forced us to adopt a second day of Yom tov. On Shavuot there was no such problem. It was to be 50 days after passover and by then everybody knew the correct day of passover. Yet we do, based on the directive of our sages, observe two days. It is our torah not G-d's.

Our acceptance of the Torah means our acceptance of the right and duty of our Sages to interpret Torah so that it can be applied on earth. We may not have accepted the Torah willingly on Shavuot, it may have taken well over a thousand years until the Persian Jews enthusiastically embraced Torah. What we received on Shavuot was the license to apply divine principles to earthly issues. We received our Torah. What we do with it is up to us. We can view as a historical curiosity with no relevance for our lives today. We can on the other hand embrace the totality of Torah, and let it guide us as it has so successfully for thousands of years. The choice is ours.

Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Kelman, in addition to his founder and leadership roles in Torah in Motion, teaches Ethics, Talmud and Rabbinics at the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto.

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>
reply-To neustadt@torah.org, genesis@torah.org
To weekly-halacha@torah.org
Subject Weekly Halacha - Parshas Terumah
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)
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Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Using One Oven for Meat and Dairy

Using one oven for both meat and dairy demands vigilance lest one transgress any of the laws pertaining to basar-b'chalah. Ideally, separate ovens for meat and dairy are the solution for preventing basar-b'chalah mix ups, and many people do have separate ovens for that very reason. Those who do not, however, should familiarize themselves with the answers to the following questions.

Question: May an oven be used for meat and dairy dishes at the same time?

Discussion: It is prohibited to bake uncovered¹ meat and dairy dishes in one oven for the following three reasons:

1. The meat may come into actual contact with the dairy or vice versa, either through touching, or when particles from one dish splatter onto the other.
2. When two foods are baked or roasted simultaneously in one oven, they absorb each other's aromas (reicha).
3. When moist foods or liquid mixtures are baked in an oven, steam (zei'ah) is emitted, carrying the taste of one food to the other.

If, b'diavad, one cooked meat and dairy dishes in the same oven simultaneously, he must consult a rav to determine whether the food may be eaten or not.²

Question: May an oven be used for meat and dairy dishes that are baked consecutively?

Discussion: The first two problems mentioned above—items touching or splattering each other, and reicha—do not apply, since

the meat and dairy dishes will not be in the oven at the same time. We are, however, still concerned with the issue of *zei'ah*. This is because whenever moist foods (as opposed to “dry” foods like a potato) are baked in an oven, steam is emitted. When, for instance, uncovered meat is cooked in an oven, the steam emitted carries the taste of the meat and “deposits” it onto the walls and roof of the oven. When moist dairy foods or liquid mixtures are subsequently cooked uncovered in the same oven, their steam rises, absorbs the meat taste from the walls and roof of the oven, condenses, and falls back into the dairy dish. The dairy dish is now prohibited as *basar b'chalav*.

The *poskim* debate whether or not we need to be concerned with this problem. Some hold that there is no issue of *zei'ah* when baking or roasting inside a closed oven, since the oven's heat is intense enough to completely dry out and evaporate the steam which rises from the food even before it reaches the walls or roof of the oven.³ Thus no steam is deposited onto the walls or roof of the oven to later condense and fall back into the dairy food. According to this opinion *zei'ah* is never a problem for foods baking inside a hot oven,⁴ and it is, therefore, permitted to use the same oven for meat and dairy consecutively, even *l'chatchilah*, as long as the surface of the oven roof and walls is free of any meat spills or residue. Many people follow this opinion.⁵

But other *poskim* are more stringent. In their opinion we can not or do not know for certain that all of the steam will be evaporated before being deposited onto the oven walls or roof, and it is, therefore, still possible that some meaty steam will enter the dairy food.⁶ [Note, however, that even according to the strict opinion, this problem affects only most gas ovens. With electric ovens or other ovens where the heating element is on top, *zei'ah* would be no problem since the steam will definitely dry up and vanish before it reaches the walls and roof of the oven.⁷] To avoid this eventuality, one should adhere to the following procedure:

First, determine the primary use of the oven—is it going to be used mainly for meat, or for dairy dishes? For the sake of this Discussion, let us assume that the primary use of the oven will be for meat dishes. For halachic purposes, this oven now becomes a “meat oven,” in which liquid or solid meat dishes will be roasted and baked, covered and uncovered. [To later use the oven for dairy dishes, one should line the racks with aluminum foil. The foil should be changed when dairy dishes are placed in the oven.]

Before using this oven for dairy, one must first make sure that the oven is completely clean from any meat spills or residue. Once that is ascertained, a dairy dish (or a *parve* food which will be eaten with dairy) may be placed into the oven as long as one of the following two conditions is met: 1) The dairy dish is thoroughly covered; 2) The dairy dish is not moist. Since, generally, only moist or liquid dishes produce steam,⁸ there will be no way for the meat steam which found its way onto the walls and roof of the oven to be released from the walls and roof and enter the dairy dish, as occurs when moist dishes are cooked.

Question: According to the stringent opinions mentioned earlier, what can be done so that an uncovered, moist dairy food or liquid mixture can be baked *l'chatchilah* in a meat oven?

Discussion: Before moist dairy foods can be baked in a meat oven,⁹ the oven needs to be properly koshered. There are different opinions as to whether our ovens can be koshered and what means may be used to kosher them.¹⁰ Some *poskim* maintain that there is no easy, practical¹¹ way to kosher our ovens, since an oven cannot be koshered unless sparks are actually seen during the koshering process.¹² Other *poskim* are of the opinion that our ovens can be koshered only through a self-cleaning cycle, which heats the oven to

approximately 900°F.¹³ But the majority of *poskim*¹⁴ hold that heating the oven at its highest setting for one hour is sufficient to kosher an oven for consecutive use of meat and dairy, and many households follow this opinion.¹⁵

To review: Whether or not *zei'ah* is a concern when cooking uncovered, moist dairy inside a meat oven is debatable. There are many who follow the more lenient opinion and use their oven for meat and dairy consecutively, as long as they ascertain that there are no spills or residue on the surface of the oven.¹⁶ Still, in deference to the more stringent opinions mentioned earlier, it is appropriate, at the very least, to kosher the oven by heating it at its highest temperature setting for one hour before using for moist, uncovered dairy, or for *parve* food which will be eaten with dairy.¹⁷ Obviously, having two separate ovens for meat and dairy, or self-cleaning an oven between meat and dairy, avoids all of these halachic concerns.

Note: Challah may be baked in the same oven that was used to roast uncovered meat, even though the challah may be eaten with dairy. Challah dough does not produce enough steam to release the meat steam that was deposited onto the walls and roof of the oven.¹⁸ The oven should first be thoroughly cleaned from any visible meat residue. Preferably, the racks should be changed or covered with foil. Question: Do the halachos mentioned earlier concerning meat and dairy in the same oven apply to microwave ovens as well? Discussion: No, they do not. All *poskim* would agree that it is forbidden to use the same microwave oven for meat and dairy consecutively. The air space, roof and walls of a microwave oven do not become hot enough for us to assume that the steam that is emitted from the foods will be “burned” before being deposited onto the walls or roof of the oven. In addition, microwave ovens are small, compact units, which quickly fill up with steam from the food being warmed in them.

Koshering a microwave between meat and dairy or dairy and meat is halachically problematic. Some *poskim*¹⁹ permit koshering a microwave by first scrubbing it clean, waiting twenty-four hours,²⁰ and then placing a cup of water inside the microwave and heating it for 5-10 minutes, until thick steam fills the oven.²¹ Other *poskim*, however, are wary of permitting this procedure, and it is not recommended to rely on the lenient opinions.²²

Even if koshering a microwave would be allowed, the *poskim* discourage using the same microwave for both meat and dairy, since it is a long-standing custom²³ that we do not kosher utensils from meat to dairy or vice versa. The *poskim* also recommend not to use the same microwave for meat and dairy even if one is careful to keep all of the food covered while being cooked or warmed in the microwave.²⁴

It is clear, therefore, that those who need to use a microwave for both meat and dairy foods should make every effort to get two separate microwave ovens and designate one for meat and the other for dairy.

- 1 Technically, if one of the foods is tightly covered, they can both bake in the oven at the same time; see Y.D. 108:1. Practically speaking, however, this is not a good idea, for if the cover slips off or is lifted off inadvertently, or if one of the foods spills over, the food might very well be forbidden to eat, even *b'diavad* (see Kesav Sofer 54 and Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:10).
- 2 Since, *b'diavad*, there are several factors that must be taken into account, such as the type of oven, the proximity of the foods to each other, the amounts of the foods in question, the type of foods (“sharp” or bland) and other factors.
- 3 In addition, the walls and roof of the oven are hot enough so that immediately upon impact any steam or condensation will burn

- and fizzle out and will not remain in the walls or roof of the oven.
- 4 It must be stressed that these poskim surely reckon with ze'ah as a factor rendering a food item dairy or meaty, but they maintain that inside a closed oven there is no ze'ah as explained above.
 - 5 See She'alas Ya'avets 1:193, quoted by Yad Efrayim, Y.D. 97:2, Maharsham 3:208. See Sefer Zikaron Yad Moshe Tzvi ha-Levi, pg. 201, where Rav B.Y. Vosner proves from several sources that this is the opinion of most poskim and the prevalent custom.
 - 6 Beis Shelomo, Y.D. 164; Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40; Minchas Yitzchak 5:20; Chelkas Ya'akov 2:136.
 - 7 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:59.
 - 8 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40 based on Pischei Teshuvah 92:6. This is a generality, since most solid foods do not produce much steam. If, in fact, a fair amount of steam was detected rising from a solid food, then we need to be concerned with it as we would be with a liquid food.
 - 9 The following procedure is for using the oven l'chatchilah. B'diavad, there are several possible heterim that allow dairy food that was baked in a meat oven (or vice versa) to be eaten. See Maharsham 3:26; Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40; Yabia Omer, Y.D. 5:7. A rav should be consulted.
 - 10 The poskim discuss the following issues: 1. Are our ovens—which are made from metal but coated with porcelain—considered klei cheres which cannot be koshered without libun chamur? 2. Is it sufficient to kosher an oven by heating it with fire from an external source, or does the fire have to originate inside the oven? 3. Since most of our baking is done in pans, may we rely on libun kal since the food does not (usually) touch the actual oven surface? 4. Even if libun chamur is required, must sparks actually be seen during the libun?
 - 11 Although an oven can be koshered by using a blowtorch, this is a dangerous and cumbersome process which should be undertaken only by a professional who is also well-versed in the halachah.
 - 12 Sha'ali Tziyon 2:20; She'arim Metzuyanim B'halachah 116:2; Badei ha-Shulchan 92:8, s.v. l'chatchilah. See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:60.
 - 13 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach, vol. 1, pg. 181, and in Ohalei Yeshurun, vol. 1, pg. 72 and 77); Minchas Chein, pg. 29. When koshering the oven from meat or dairy to parve, half of the self-cleaning cycle (about an hour and a half) is sufficient; Rav M. Stern (quoted in Pischei Halachah, Kashruth, pg. 114).
 - 14 Rav Y.E. Henkin (written responsum published in ha-Darom, vol. 15); Rav A. Kotler (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach 1, pg. 180); Yesodei Yeshurun, vol. 6, pg. 157; Minchas Yitzchak 3:66 (see, however, 5:20, where he is hesitant); Chazon Ovadyah, pg. 73:4; Rav M. Stern, Pischei Halachah, Kashruth, pg. 114).
 - 15 See Seder Pesach K'hilchaso, pg. 64, who quotes many poskim as allowing this leniency.
 - 16 Another practical suggestion is to place some foil under the meat item being baked so that whatever spills over will not land directly on the racks or the oven floor but on the foil. The foil is then removed before the dairy item is inserted.
 - 17 Some poskim additionally recommend that twenty-four hours elapse after using the oven for meat before the oven is used for dairy.
 - 18 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40; 1:59.

- 19 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach, pg. 182); Rav S. Vosner (mi-Beis Levi, Nissan 5753); Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:212; Yalkut Yosef (O.C. 451), pg. 360.
- 20 Scrubbing the microwave and waiting 24 hours before koshering a microwave is required, since the koshering process of a microwave is hagalah, not libun kal, and a thorough cleaning and a wait of 24 hours are prerequisites of hagalah; see Mishnah Berurah 451:22, 452:20 and Rama, Y.D. 121:2.
- 21 This leniency does not apply to microwave ovens with a browning element or to convection microwave ovens.
- 22 See Shevus Yitzchak, Mikrogal, pg. 57, quoting Rav Y.S. Elyashiv; The Laws of Kashrus, pg. 234.
- 23 Quoted by Mishnah Berurah 509:25. See The Daily Halachah Discussion to 29 Cheshvan for the details concerning this custom.
- 24 Shevus Yitzchak, Mikrogal, pg. 57, quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv.

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 By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

I am planning to send out a pre-Shavuos article some time before Shabbos- and no article in honor of Parshas Behaaloscha- Just keeping everyone posted.

Why Parshas Naso Sometimes Introduces Shavuos By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: In most years, the parsha of Bamidbar falls on the Shabbos before Shavuos, and Parshas Naso falls the Shabbos after Shavuos. However, this year Bamidbar falls out a week earlier, and Naso is also before Shavuos. Why is this year different from the other years?

Question #2: Why are most of the "Double Parshiyos" clustered together in and around Sefer Vayikra?

Question #3: Why are the Torah's parshiyos of such disparate length? Some parshiyos are very long -- the longest being this week's Parsha, Naso, which contains 176 pesukim. Yet at the end of the Torah we have four parshiyos that are extremely short -- all of them between 30 and 52 pesukim. Why aren't the parshiyos of similar length?

Answer:

The Gemara teaches:

Ezra decreed that the Jews should read the curses of the Tochacha in Vayikra before Shavuos and those of Devarim before Rosh Hashanah. Why? In order to end the year together with its curses! [The Gemara then comments:] We well understand why we read the Tochacha of Devarim before Rosh Hashanah because the year is ending, but why is that of Vayikra read before Shavuos. Is Shavuos the beginning of a year? Yes, Shavuos is the beginning of a new year, as the Mishnah explains that the world is judged on Shavuos for its fruit" (Megillah 31b).

However, this Gemara does not seem to explain our practice. There are two Tochachos in the Torah, one in Parshas Bechukosai, the last

parsha of sefer Vayikra, and the second in Parshas Ki Savo, but neither of these parshiyos is ever read immediately before Shavuos or Rosh Hashanah. There is always at least one other Shabbos wedged between. In the case of the Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai, Shavuos occurs usually after the next parsha, Bamidbar, but occasionally after the following parsha, Naso, as it does this year. The reading of the second Tochacha, Ki Savo is never the parsha before Rosh Hashanah. The parsha after it, Netzavim, always has the distinction of being read on the Shabbos immediately before Rosh Hashanah.

Tosafos (ad loc.) explains that the Tochacha should be read two weeks before each "New Year" to allow a buffer week between the Tochacha and the beginning of the year. Thus, Ezra's decree was that the two Tochachos should be read early enough so that there is another reading following them before the "year" is over. The Levush (Orach Chayim 428:4) explains that without the intervening Shabbos reading as a shield, the Satan could use the Tochacha as a means of prosecuting against us on the judgment day. The intervenient Shabbos when we read a different parsha prevents the Satan from prosecuting, and as a result we can declare: End the year together with its curses!

Divide and Conquer!

We can now explain why the very end of the Torah is divided into such small parshiyos. The Tochacha of Parshas Ki Savo is located towards the end of Sefer Devarim. In order to complete our annual reading of the Torah on Simchas Torah, we want to read this Tochacha at least two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, which means that we must divide the remainder of Sefer Devarim into enough parshiyos for:

- (1) A buffer parsha between the Tochacha and Rosh Hashanah.
- (2) One or two Shabbosos between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos.
- (3) The Torah reading for Simchas Torah, when we complete the year's reading, as established by Chazal (Megillah 31a).

To accommodate all this, the end of Devarim is divided into four tiny parshiyos: Netzavim, Vayeileich, Haazinu, and Vezos Haberacha: Netzavim always becomes the "buffer parsha" read on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. When we need two Shabbos readings between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos, then Vayeileich is read as a separate parsha on Shabbos Shuva, and Haazinu is read on the Shabbos between Yom Kippur and Sukkos. When there is only one Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos, then Haazinu is read on that Shabbos, which is Shabbos Shuva. And Parshas Haazinu must be short enough to create a parsha after it, Vezos Haberacha, which serves as the reading for Simchas Torah.

Bamidbar is always before Shavuos

Returning back to the Gemara in Megillah, we now understand why the end of Sefer Vayikra always falls at least two Shabbosos before Shavuos. Since the Tochacha is located at the end of Vayikra, Bamidbar must always be read before Shavuos to be a buffer between the Tochacha and the "new year" of the produce of the trees, as explained by the Gemara.

We can now refer back to one of our original questions: Why are most of the "Double Parshiyos" clustered together in and around Sefer Vayikra?

The "Double Parshiyos"

There are seven potential occurrences when we read "double parshiyos", that is, two consecutive parshiyos are read on one Shabbos as if they are one long parsha. These seven are: Vayakheil/Pekudei, the last two parshiyos of Sefer Shemos. Tazria/Metzora, in Sefer Vayikra.

Acharei Mos/Kedoshim, in Sefer Vayikra.

Behar/Bechukosai, in Sefer Vayikra.

Chukas/Balak, in Sefer Bamidbar.

Matos/Masei, the last two parshiyos of Sefer Bamidbar.

Netzavim/Vayeileich, towards the end of Sefer Devarim.

This leads us to a series of interesting questions:

- (1) Why are there no doubled parshiyos in Bereishis, nor any for almost the entire length of Sefer Shemos?
- (2) Why do we cluster together four doubled parshiyos between the last week of Shemos and Sefer Vayikra?
- (3) And lastly, why do we not double any parshiyos at the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar?

With a little more background, we will be able to answer all of these questions.

In this article, I will discuss the reason for the first four of these doubling of the parshiyos.

Leap and Common Years

When Hashem commanded us to create a calendar, He insisted that we use the moon to define the months, and yet keep our year consistent with the seasons, which are dependent on the sun. (The word "month" originally meant "a period of time corresponding to the moon's cycle," which is approximately 29 1/2 days, but the use of "month" today in the western calendar is simply a convenient way to divide the year and has nothing to do with the moon's cycle.)

This mitzvah does not allow us to create either a purely solar calendar, the basis of the common western calendar, which ignores the moon's changing phases. Nor does it allow us to create a perfectly lunar calendar of twelve lunar months, since this lunar "year" is approximately eleven days shorter than a solar year. If we were to follow a calendar of twelve lunar months every year, our months would not fall out in the same season. Pesach would occur sometimes in the dead of winter and Sukkos in the spring. This is exactly what transpires in the Moslem calendar, which always has exactly twelve lunar months in every year. Moslem months do not fall out in the same season. For example, Ramadan this year falls in the summer, but in a few years will occur in the winter.

The Torah requires that Pesach fall in the spring, yet requires that the months correlate to the cycle of the moon. We fulfill this mitzvah by occasionally adding an extra month to the year – thereby creating 13 month years, which we call "leap years," to offset the almost 11 day difference between twelve lunar months and a solar year. These extra months keep the Yomim Tovim in their appropriate seasons.

When we add an extra month to the year, we add four and sometimes five Shabbosos to the year, yet we want each calendar year to complete the entire Torah reading on the next Simchas Torah! In order to have a reading for every possible Shabbos, we need to divide the Torah into enough parshiyos so that even the longest year has a parsha for each Shabbos. Since a Jewish leap year may contain 55 Shabbosos, Chumash is divided into a total of 54 parshiyos so that there is always a parsha to read every week. (There are 54 parshiyos, and not 55, because we do not read a consecutive Torah parsha on the Shabbos that occurs during Pesach. Although this is also true on Sukkos, remember that on Simchas Torah we read Parshas Vezos Haberacha, which is one of the 54 parshiyos, so Sukkos does not eliminate the need for a parsha that week.)

To sum up, the reason for dividing the Torah into 54 parshiyos is so that there are enough parshiyos for every Shabbos of the yearly cycle that begins and ends on Simchas Torah. In reality, the need for reading each of the 54 parshiyos on a different Shabbos occurs very rarely – only on leap years when Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos. Only that particular year has 54 Shabbosos that do not coincide with any

Yom Tov dates (or more accurately, 53 Shabbosos plus Simchas Torah).

every part of the Torah in the course of the year, and to celebrate our annual siyum haTorah on Simchas Torah!

Why do we "double" Parshiyos?

Since most years require less than 54 parshiyos, how do we make sure that we complete the Torah reading for the year on Simchas Torah? The answer is that we combine parshiyos.

In almost every occurrence of a common year, we double the following parshiyos: Tazria/Metzora; Acharei Mos/Kedoshim and Behar/Bechukosai. Why these three sets of parshiyos, all of which are in Sefer Vayikra?

Just as a leap year is created by adding an extra month to Adar shortly before Pesach, the parshiyos are not doubled until the month of Nisan. Thus, we do not add these extra parshiyos until the year is clearly a common year.

At this point we can answer the second question raised above: Why do we "double up" so many parshiyos in Sefer Vayikra?

The answer is that we do not double parshiyos until it is already obvious whether it is a leap or common year, yet we need to read the parshiyos in a way that we complete this process early enough to read Bamidbar before Shavuos. The above-mentioned parshiyos are not read until the beginning of the month of Nisan. Thus, we have a small window between the beginning of Nisan and the end of Sefer Vayikra in which we try to complete all the double parshiyos necessary.

Why did I write above "in almost every occurrence of a common year, we double these parshiyos"? Because there is one instance in which the parshiyos of Behar and Bechukosai are combined in Chutz La'aretz, but they are read on separate weeks in Eretz Yisrael. This occurs in a common year when the eighth day of Pesach, observed only outside Eretz Yisrael, falls on a Shabbos. The communities of the exile read a Yom Tov reading, whereas in Eretz Yisrael communities read Parshas Shemini, the next reading in order. In this instance, the communities of Eretz Yisrael must separate Behar from Bechukosai to avoid the Tochacha from being read the week before Shavuos.

Vayakheil/Pekudei

Almost, but not all common years, also combine together the last two parshiyos in Sefer Shemos, Vayakheil/Pekudei. There is one instance of a common year when this does not happen. When Rosh Hashanah and Shemini Atzeres fall on Thursday in a common year that has 355 days, a fairly rare occurrence [and one of the instances of a common year when Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos], there is an extra Shabbos between Sukkos and the next Rosh Hashanah, and in this year Vayakheil and Pekudei are read on separate weeks even though it is a common year.

I still have not explained the answer to our first question: Why this year does Bamidbar fall out two weeks before Shavuos, rather than the week immediately before Shavuos.

The Longest Year

The answer is that whenever a leap year falls out with Rosh Hashanah on a Thursday, as it does this year, that year has an extra Shabbos. In this instance, the leap year added five shabbosos to the year. The result of having no double parshiyos in these years between Simchas Torah and Rosh Hashanah is that both Bamidbar and Naso fall before Shavuos.}

Conclusion

We now understand what the printers and calendar makers have known all along: Why and when certain parshiyos are doubled and when not. All this is to guarantee that we have a chance to revisit