

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON NASO - 5763

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RABBI ELI SHULMAN
Young Israel of Midwood
Parshas Naso
[Drasha from last year]

This week we read about the Mitzvah of Nesias Kapayim - duchening; which requires that the Kohanim should bless the people with the triple blessing of Yivarechicha, Yaer, Yisa. We are all familiar with this Mitzvah since we participate in it every Yom Tov. Actually, the Torah itself doesn't limit it to Yom Tov. Nor does the Talmud. In fact, the Rambam when formulating this Mitzvah, writes that the Kohanim have a Mitzvah to bless the people every day. And it would seem to stand to reason, then, that we should have duchening every day. In fact, there were Gedolei Yisrael who wanted to institute duchening every day. The Vilna Gaon tried to do so, but unsuccessfully. (He tried twice, and each time something untoward happened, which he took as a sign to desist from further attempts.) R' Nosson Adler - the Chasam Sofer's rebbe - instituted duchening every day. In Israel, of course, the Minhag is to duchen every day and that was also the Minhag in Egypt. For the most part, however, the Minhag has become to refrain from duchening except on Yom Tov. The Rema explains the basis for this Minhag. Blessing others, he explains, requires a certain elevated state of mind. And nowadays, because of the pressures of our daily lives and our constant pursuit of Parnasa, it is difficult to summon up that special state of mind, except on Yom Tov, when the festive atmosphere elevates us. This is difficult to understand. Kriyas Shma and Tefilah for example, also require a special state of mind, intense Kavanah. And yet we continue to say Kriyas Shma and to daven every day. Why should Birchas Kohanim be different?

I would like to preface two other unique aspects of the Mitzvah of Birchas Kohanim.

On the basis of the language of the pasuk (Emor Lahem) the Yerushalmi derives that the Mitzvah only goes into effect when the people ask the Kohanim to bless them. That, by the way, is why we call out Kohanim to the Kohanim, summoning them - asking them - to bless us.

Why should this be necessary?

Another rather strange thing about the Mitzvah of Birchas Kohanim. The Gemara in Sotah tells of the following dialogue: The students of Rabi Elazar Ben Shamuah ask him: How did you merit long life? He answer: I never made a Beis Kneses a Kapindariya (shortcut), and I did not step on the heads of the holy nation, and I did not raise my hands without a Bracha (Lo Nasati Kapai Beloh Bracha).

What's so special about that? Don't all Kohanim do that?

The posking derive from here that apparently in Talmudic times it was not universal practice for the Kohanim to recite a Bracha

before duchening. That was the special practice of Reb Elazar ben Shamuah.

Why not? Don't all Mitzvos require a Bracha?

The answer apparently is this. We know that there are 2 kinds of Mitzvos: Bein Adam Lamakom and Ben Adam Lechavero. One of the distinguishing features of Mitzvos Bein Adam Lichaveiro is that the Chiyuv only applies when there is a need and, often, only when there is a request. The Chiyuv of Tzdakah applies only when there is a poor person and only when the Ani asks for Tzdaka. The Chiyuv to lend to someone who needs a loan applies only when one is asked for a loan. And so on.

Another special feature of Mitzvos Bein Adam Lichaveiro is that they don't require a Bracha. We don't make a Bracha before giving Tzdaka or paying a shiva call, or being Mevaker Choleh. Many reasons have been given for this fact, but whatever the reason, we can take it as a given.

Notice that these are the same features that we noticed regarding Duchaning: The Chiyuv applies only when the Kohanim are asked; and there is no mandatory Bracha.

Which leads to the conclusion that Birchas Kohanim is a Mitzva Bein Adam Lichaveiro.

Which, of course, makes sense.

And while there is no obligatory Bracha, we follow the practice of Rabi Elazar Ben Shamuah and make a Bracha anyway, and the language of that Bracha emphasizes that Birchas Kohanim is, indeed, a Mitzva Bein Adam Lichaveiro, an expression of love for our fellow-Jew: Asher Kidishanu Bimitzvosav Vitzivanu Levarch Es Amo Yisroel BiAhava

Let's go back to the Rama, who writes that Birchas Kohanim requires a special frame of mind, which our Tirdos preclude. That special frame of mind is not Kavana. Birchas Kohanim doesn't need more Kavanah than Kriyas Shma and Tefilah. That special frame of mind, rather, is Ahava.

What the Rama is saying is an important insight into human nature. Even the most loving person, when he is caught up in his own troubles, has difficulty feeling love for others. Tirdos and pressure cause us to become self-absorbed. And therefore in the pressure-cooker lives that we lead, says the Rama, it is difficult for the Kohanim to summon up the Ahava that is required for Birchas Kohanim, except on Yom Tov, when the special atmosphere shuts out the every-day pressures.

(And perhaps that also explains why the Minhag in Eretz Yisrael remains to duchen every day. Because Eretz Yisrael has a special power to pull Jews together.)

There are several important lessons here to be learned. There is, first of all, a domestic lesson. Most of us live very pressured lives, and the Rama is telling us that that can affect the loving relationship that we ought to have with our families; children and spouses. It's important to be on guard against this, and also to try and find times that are islands of tranquility.

There is also a communal lesson here. This past week there have been several disturbing warnings from our government about the possibility of terror here in our country and in our city. Our collective blood-pressure is surely rising. As we feel increased pressure here in our own lives, there is a human tendency for us to lessen our concern for our brethren in Eretz Yisroel who feel the presence of terror all the time. We have to be on guard against that.

The Kohanim are commanded to bless the Jewish people BiAhava - with love. Through their Ahava they are able to be the conduit through which Bracha is e world and onto our people. May we, too, rise to the requisite level of Ahavas Yisrael that these times demand, and merit to be, too, a conduit through which Bracha will flow, to us and to all Israel.

From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: June 11, 2003 To: weekly1@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - A Blessing with Joy to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org to unsubscribe or for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org the HTML version of this dvar Torah can be found at:

<http://www.torahweb.org/>

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

A BLESSING WITH JOY

All mitzvos should preferably be performed in a state of joy. If a person can not attain this emotion, the mitzva must still be performed. The mitzva of birchas kohanim is unique in that if a kohen is not happy, he does not perform this mitzva. It is because of this requirement of joy that a kohen who is in aveilus leaves during birchas kohanim. There are some opinions that a kohen who is not married should not perform the mitzva of birchas kohanim because he also lacks the full degree of happiness necessary for the proper fulfillment of this mitzva. For this reason, ashkenazi communities outside of Eretz Yisroel only perform birchas kohanim on yom tov because we are too occupied with our mundane business to be in the state of mind befitting birchas kohanim. (for details concerning these practices see Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Orach Chaim 128:43-44). Why should birchas kohanim be singled out from other mitzvos to require joy as a prerequisite to its proper fulfillment?

In Michah (5:8), we are taught that Hashem wants us to practice justice and to love kindness. The Chofetz Chaim observes that the precise wording of the pasuk is in contrast to our mindset as we pursue these two lofty goals. Whereas justice has to be carried out, though not necessarily with love, kindness cannot merely be done without love. Giving to others is not a perfunctory act but rather an expression of a will for the well being of the recipient.

Concerning the mitzva of tzedakah we are given a unique prohibition. In Devarim (15:10) we are commanded not to resent giving tzedakah. Physically, giving tzedakah while resenting the act disqualifies it as a fulfillment of ahavas chessed. The proper frame of mind is critical for fulfilling these mitzvos because of the unique opportunity they provide us which is to imitate Hashem in all His ways. Just as Hashem not only performs acts of kindness, but is One whose essence is goodness, so too our personalities are supposed to become synonymous with goodness. An act of chessed or tzedakah done without the acknowledgement that such acts are a privilege can never transform individuals into those whose very personalities are defined by kindness.

The kohen who is called upon to bless the people is not asked to merely pronounce the words. Birchas Kohanim is not like other verbal mitzvos that can technically be fulfilled regardless of one's mood. The kohen is called upon to echo the blessing of Hashem unto His people. To bestow a blessing is the ultimate kindness. Just as Hashem blesses us as an expression of His kindness, so to the kohen must emulate Hashem in this manner. A blessing must be accompanied by joy or else it is the equivalent of tzadaka given with resentment. If a kohen cannot reach this level it is better for him to leave shul rather than bless half-heartedly. If kohanim cannot properly bless Hashem's people all year long, it is preferable to delay the bracha until yom tov when it can be given properly.

The bracha recited before birchas kohanim is "l'varech es amo Yisroel b'ahava" ("to bless His nation Israel with love"). Although the phrase "with love" is not recited in the berachos preceding other mitzvos, love and joy are integral to this mitzva. May we merit to see the brachos of birchas kohanim fulfilled and soon see this mitzva be performed in the Beis Hamikdosh as Hashem truly will bless us with His love.

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: June 12, 2003 To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Nasso "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Nasso

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 375, Ain Osin Mitzvos Chavilos.

Too Much "Ish" May Contribute To The Sotah's Association With Another "Ish"

The introduction to the law of the Sotah [the suspected wife] is "Any man [ish ish], whose wife shall go astray and commit treachery against him" [Bamidbar 5:12]. The Medrash comments that we learn from here that a person should be easygoing ('vatran') in his household.

This would seem to be a strange pasuk [verse] on which to attach the advice that one should have a "live and let live" attitude. Surely the Medrash is not suggesting that if a man's wife is unfaithful to him, he should be easygoing about the matter and overlook it. If a man discovers that his wife is being unfaithful, he is biblically prohibited from continuing the marriage.

So why then, in this pasuk, where the wife is the problem, does the Medrash give advice to the husband about how he should conduct himself? Bear in mind that even if the woman is found to be 'innocent' and has not committed the offense of adultery, still she still is far from being fault free. In order to have become a Sotah, she must have gone into seclusion with a man with whom her husband already warned her to go alone.

The Medrash is prompted by the pasuk's strange use of the terminology "ish ish" (literally 'a man, a man') to describe the husband in this situation. It would have certainly been sufficient to write "ish" once to get the point across. The redundancy apparently alludes to the fact that this husband was too much of an 'ish'. He was perhaps too assertive, too particular, too overbearing. He was the type of husband who ruled his house as a type of dictatorship. He was abusive and oppressive. The result of there being too much of the 'ish' is the wife going astray.

The woman may in fact have sinned and be deserving of punishment. But the Medrash is pointing out that such things do not happen in a vacuum. Of course, if a husband is abusive, the wife is still not justified in being unfaithful. Heaven Forbid. People are obviously and ultimately responsible for their own actions. But a contributory cause of the sin might have in fact been that the husband was "ish, ish" - he was too oppressive.

There is no greater assault to the peace and tranquility of a marriage relationship than to have one of the partners in that marriage commit adultery. But the Medrash is reminding us that adultery is only the culmination. The problem started with smaller things. There are many impediments to a peaceful and serene home setting.

The Torah is telling us that a person must look at himself and ask "Did I have a part in this?" "Is this totally her fault?" Did underlying problems with lack of Sholom Bayis [domestic tranquility], perhaps related to the husband being too overbearing and not easy going enough, contribute to the situation?

Where Does The Holiness of the Nazir Stem From?

The parsha of the Nazirite follows the parsha of the unfaithful wife. A person who accepts upon himself the status of being a Nazir is akin in holiness to that of a High Priest. There are only two people in the world who are not allowed to become Tameh

[ritually impure] through contact with their dead parents: The Nazir and the Kohen Gadol [High Priest].

The Avnei Nezer (1839-1910; Rav Avraham Borenstein of Sochachov) once explained why a regular Kohen can come into contact with a dead parent, but a Nazir and a Kohen Gadol cannot. The Avnei Nezer says that every Kohen is a Kohen by virtue of his parents. It is only right that if I received my priesthood status thanks to my parents that I should be able to pay my parents their last respects and attend their funeral. However, in the case of the Kohen Gadol and the Nazir, they achieve their status of holiness not by virtue of their parents, but on their own. Consequently, they cannot attend even a parent's funeral. Be that as it may, what is the greatness of the Nazir? He must abstain from drinking wine for thirty days. He must abstain from getting a haircut or shaving for thirty days. Finally, he must abstain from coming into contact with a dead person for thirty days. For that, he has the "crown of holiness about his head" [6:7]. What is the greatness in these three types of abstaining that suddenly places the Nazir on the same level as the High Priest? After all, he can drink whiskey and beer. The only restriction is haircuts and shaving, wine, and funerals. There are diets that are more severe than that! From where does the great holiness stem?

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1916-2001), zt"l, wrote that the greatness of the Nazir was not the fact that he abstained from wine and shaving for 30 days or that he abstained from attending funerals for a month's time. The Nazir's greatness stemmed from the fact that he bothered to think. He bothered to look around at his world and to contemplate the meaning of what was going on around him.

Our Sages explain that the reason for the juxtaposition of the section dealing with the Sotah and the section dealing with the Nazir is to teach that it is appropriate that one who witnesses the ordeal of a Sotah, should take a vow to abstain from wine. Every day, we see things that SHOULD make an impression upon us -- but they do not. We see occurrences that are upsetting and distressing. But what do we do? We shrug and go on with our lives. The greatness of the Nazir is that he stops, contemplates, and takes action based on what he observes around him. The action he takes is not oppressive.

It does not radically change his life. It will not impact his health whatsoever. On the contrary, it is a very minor set of abstentions. But that is precisely the point.

The fact that he is moved to do something realistic, something that he can easily keep distinguishes the Nazir from the populace around him. He is an individual who takes the time to think about the implications of what he sees around himself, and to do something about it on a personal level.

Rav Gifter cites a comment from Rabbeinu Yona. "If the person who wishes to repent is weak and cannot handle deprivations and fasting -- let him just abstain from fully indulging in all of his normal eating and drinking habits." By all means, eat -- just do not take a second portion! Such a person need not engage in radical self-denial -- just let him skip dessert! Pass up that second piece of kugel, out of respect for your commitment to your Creator that you are determined to lead a more spiritual life.

This is a very low-key and very non-ostentatious means of Divine Service. No one will notice that you have passed up on a second helping or that you skipped dessert. But, if you accept this as a religious obligation for the purpose of becoming a more spiritual personality -- it can be a very meaningful way of serving the Master of the World. Perhaps, Rabbeinu Yona writes, this can be even more meaningful for a person than engaging in weekly fasting.

This is the contribution of the Nazir to spirituality. Everyone else saw the Sotah, shook their heads in disapproval, and went on with their lives as if nothing had happened. The Nazir saw the Sotah and determined that he needed to take action -- be it perhaps only symbolic and unobtrusive in scope. But at least he did something. That spiritual activism is what crowns him with the uniqueness of the status of the Nazir and equates him in certain regards with the Kohain Gadol.

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THE PRACTICAL TORAH
RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas Nasso:

BIRCHAS KOHANIM RECITED BY A NON-KOHEIN

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

In this Parsha, the Torah articulates the Beracha which the Kohanim are supposed to pronounce when blessing the Jewish people (BeMidbar 6:24-26). The Gemara in Kesubos (24b) states that if a Jew who is not a Kohein raises his hand and recites this Beracha, known as the Birchas Kohanim, he violates a Mitzvas Asei by so doing. Rashi (Ibid. s.v. D'Issur) explains this by citing the Posuk in this Parsha that introduces the Birchas Kohanim (Ibid. Pasuk 23), which says, addressing the Kohanim, "Koh Tevarchu Es Bnai Yisrael," so shall you bless Bnai Yisrael, from which the Gemara (Ibid.) derives, according to Rashi Atem V'Lo "Zarim," only you, the Kohanim, may pronounce this Beracha and not any non-Kohein. Such a derivation is called a Lav HaBah MiChlal Aseh, which means that one violates a Torah law by ignoring this Mitzvah, although it is expressed in the positive form. It seems clear from here that a non-Kohein may not bless his child, or a student, or a friend, using the Pesukim of Birchas Kohanim. The Gemara in Shabbos (118b), however, records that one of the Tannaim stated that although he was not a Kohein, he would, upon the request of his colleagues, go up to the Duchan, the platform, and, presumably, recite Birchas Kohanim anyway. In Tosafos there (Ibid. s.v. Ilu), the Ri is quoted as saying that he does not know of any problem with a non-Kohein going up to Duchan, except the problem of a Bracha L'Batalah, an inappropriate Beracha, which would be recited, because really only the Kohanim were commanded to bless Bnai Yisrael. The implication of this statement is that it would be permissible for a non-Kohein to recite the words of the Birchas Kohanim and bless someone as long as he would not precede this recitation with a Beracha. The Ramo, in his commentary on the Tur entitled Darkei Moshe (Orach Chaim Siman 128 Os 1), quotes a view that based upon this, it would be permissible for any non-Kohein to go up to Duchan along with the Kohanim, and that it may in fact be proper because of the idea that B'Rov Am Hadras Melech, meaning that it represents greater glory for Hashem to have more people participating in a Mitzvah. He notes (Ibid.), however, that this is not the practice, perhaps because the non-Kohein may get confused and eventually go up to Duchan even when no Kohanim are present.

The Ramo (Ibid.) then asks, however, how Tosafos (Ibid.) can allow this at all, and say that there is no problem for a non-Kohein to go Duchan, when the aforementioned Gemara in Kesubos (Ibid.) implies that a non-Kohein in fact violates a Mitzvas Asei if he Duchans. The Ramo (Ibid.) tries to reconcile the two sources by suggesting that the Ri's rule permitting a non-Kohein to Duchan is intended only if he joins the Kohanim when they Duchan, whereas the Gemara in Kesubos (Ibid.) is discussing a non-Kohein who Duchans when no Kohanim are present; in such a case, the non-Kohein indeed violates a Mitzvas Asei. Despite his answer, though, the Ramo (Ibid.) still leaves the matter as a question to be pondered. The Maharsha in Shabbos, in commenting on the above cited Tosafos (Chidushei Halachos L'Shabbos Ibid.), suggests that it is indeed forbidden for a non-Kohein to recite the words of the Birchas Kohanim, as the

Gemara in Kesubos (Ibid.) indicates, and that the Tanna's comment that he would go up to Duchan, despite not being a Kohein, meant that he would go up to join the Kohanim when they would Duchan, but he would not say the words of the Beracha. It is this practice which the Ri in Tosafos (Ibid.) found acceptable. But a non-Kohein may certainly not pronounce the words of the Birchas Kohanim.

In the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sif 1), the Ramo rules that a non-Kohein should not raise his hands to Duchan, even with other Kohanim present. The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Sif Katan 1), in his attempt to reconcile the rule of the Gemara in Kesubos (Ibid.) that a non-Kohein who goes to Duchan violates a Mitzvas Asei with the practice of the Tanna in the Gemara in Shabbos (Ibid.) sanctioned by Tosafos (Ibid.), claims that the Mitzvas Asei violated is the inappropriate pronunciation of Hashem's name in the Birchas Kohanim, and that the Tanna who went up to Duchan only went up, but did not say anything. The Noda BeYehudah (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Noda BeYehudah Mahadura Kama Chelek Orach Chaim Siman 6) presents two ways to understand what the Magen Avraham (Ibid.) meant by an inappropriate use of Hashem's name; either he was referring to Hashem's name in the Beracha which is recited prior to the actual Birchas Kohanim, or to Hashem's names which appear in the actual Pesukim of the Birchas Kohanim (Ibid. Pesukim 24-26). He seems to prefer the latter explanation, implying that even saying the Psukim (Ibid.) is a problem for a non-Kohein; Rav Ovadyah Yosef (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Yabea Omer Chelek 3 Chelek Orach Chaim Siman 14 Os 8), however, thinks there is no problem for anyone to say Pesukim from the Torah, even with Hashem's name in them, and that the Magen Avraham (Ibid.) was concerned instead about mentioning Hashem's name in the Beracha preceding the actual Birchas Kohanim, a view which he quotes others as holding as well.

The Noda BeYehudah (Ibid.) also suggests a distinction between Birchas Kohanim when it was recited in the Beis HaMikdash as opposed to the Birchas Kohanim recited today, saying that perhaps only in the Beis HaMikdash was it forbidden for a non-Kohein to recite this Beracha, while nowadays it is a Mitzvah only upon Kohanim, but a non-Kohein may recite the Birchas Kohanim if he wishes. The Minchas Chinuch (Mitzvah 379 Os 1) also quotes such an interpretation, and the Pnei Yehoshua in Kesubos (Ibid. s.v. B'Gemara) suggests this as well, noting that in the Beis HaMikdash, the full name of Hashem was used, and this could not be said in the Beracha by a non-Kohein. It appears from at least some of the above sources that it would be permissible for a non-Kohein to bless someone using the words of the Birchas Kohanim nowadays, especially if he does not recite any Beracha before doing so. The Torah Temimah on this Parsha (BeMidbar Ibid. Pasuk 23 Os 131), though, suggests that even a Kohein may not be permitted to bless someone using these Pesukim other than at the designated time during davening. He also presents a variant text of the above Gemara in Shabbos (Ibid.) which indicates that the Tanna in question was not discussing Birchas Kohanim at all.

The Bach, in his commentary on the Tur (Orach Chaim Ibid. s.v. Garsinan), presents a different approach, saying that the only time a non-Kohein is forbidden to recite the Birchas Kohanim is if he does so with Nisias Kapayim, raised and outstretched hands, as the Kohanim do. But there is nothing wrong with a non-Kohein reciting the words of the Birchas Kohanim (even from the Duchan, as the aforementioned Tanna was willing to do) if he does not raise his hands. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Os 8) suggests that the only time there is any prohibition for a non-Kohein is if his intent is to fulfill the Mitzvah of blessing the people like the Kohanim, but if his intent is simply to greet or bless a friend this way, there is no problem. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 3) also discusses this, and concludes likewise that the prohibition is only if the non-Kohein's intent is to fulfill the Mitzvah of Birchas Kohanim, and he adds in the Biur Halacha (Ibid. s.v. D'Zar) that if one recites the Psukim of Birchas Kohanim outside the context of Tefillah, it is certainly permissible because he is demonstrating clearly that his intent is not to fulfill the Mitzvah required of the Kohanim.

It is thus permissible today according to all these authorities for parents to bless their children, or rabbis to bless their students, or friends to bless each other, even if they are not Kohanim, with the Pesukim of Birchas Kohanim. The Torah Temimah cited above (Ibid.) quotes that the Vilna Gaon blessed people with these Pesukim, but he placed only one hand on the recipient's head, explaining that only the Kohaim in the Beis HaMikdash blessed with two hands. Rav Ovadyah Yosef (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Yechaveh Daas Chelek 5 Siman 14), however, quotes many Poskim who say that one need not be concerned with this and may bless with two hands on the recipient's head.

From: Rafael Salasnik [rafi@brijnet.org] Sent: , June 11, 2003 4:58 PM To: daf-hashavua@shamash.org Subject: daf-hashavua Naso 5763/2003 & Dad's Med Ethics Naso-5763 U N I T E D S Y N A G O G U E - L O N D O N (Orthodox) ...

THE ETHICAL JEW

Taken from Jewish Answers to Medical Ethics Questions - Questions and Answers from the Medical Ethics Department of the Office of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, By RABBI NISSON SHULMAN.

ABORTION

In the Jewish view, abortion is not permitted because it is the killing of potential life and can, therefore, be sanctioned only for a correspondingly grave hazard to the life or health of the mother. The hazards are ordinarily physical but can include psychiatric disturbances caused or aggravated by the continued pregnancy or anguish expressed as suicidal tendencies. Under such conditions an abortion is mandated, since the life and well-being of the mother take priority over that of her unborn child. We do not believe in original sin or that man is born tainted. The newborn is pure and we do not worry about its entering heaven. Foetal indications, such as fear of deformity because of the mothers exposure to rubella or other viral diseases or because drugs may have affected foetal development do not in themselves justify recourse to abortion. Generally, indications must be maternal rather than foetal.

Some authorities, among them the Israeli sages, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg and the late Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, are quite lenient in considering maternal psychological harm as cause for abortion, especially when considered during the first ninety days of pregnancy. They even permit termination in some cases where the pregnancy is detrimental to the mothers health, even though not actually life threatening, provided that no foetal movement has as yet been felt. These opinions were rejected by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who considers them not to be in consonance with Jewish law. He would prohibit abortion unless the mother is suicidal, or otherwise severely disturbed.

There is halachic basis for a difference in approach to abortion between the first forty days of pregnancy and afterwards, since abortion during this first forty-day period is performed on a relatively unformed embryo. After forty days, abortion is considered killing, although it is not punishable by death in Jewish law. Authorities agree that it is to be considered at least the taking of "potential life". In all cases where an abortion is being considered Rabbinic authority must be consulted.

[Jewish Answers to Medical Ethics Questions: Questions and Answers from the Medical Ethics Department of the Office of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, by Rabbi Nisson E. Shulman is available at <http://www.amazon.com/> <http://tinyurl.com/cszq> or at <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/> <http://tinyurl.com/ct09>]

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PENINIM ON THE TORAH

BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS NASSO

The Kohen shall inscribe these curses on a scroll and erase it into the bitter waters. (5:23)

Although it is forbidden to erase Hashem's Sacred Name, and one who does so is punished with malkos, lashes, Hashem commanded that His Name be erased in order to engender peace and harmony between man and his wife. Domestic tranquility is the anchor of the Jewish family unit, so that one must go to all lengths to enhance the unity of the marriage bond. Throughout history, we find that this was a priority by many of our gedolim, Torah leaders. Most recently, an individual of the calibre of Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, invested endless time and energy to assure that peace reigned among those families with whom he came into contact. He would lovingly refer to his work as "the one mitzvah I do wholeheartedly." In an appreciation of his life, his son Rav Yechiel Michel devotes an impressive section to perspectives, insights and stories which emphasize the significance of marital bliss. I take the liberty of citing a few of these vignettes.

When Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl, eulogized his wife, he made a statement that confounded everyone gathered there. In fact, it left an indelible impression on the entire observant world. He said, "It is customary for one to ask mechillah, forgiveness, from his deceased spouse. In my case, however, it is not necessary to do so, for I never once offended her during our life together." It was difficult for people to grasp how two people could live together for almost sixty years and not need to ask forgiveness from one another.

Rav Stern would often remark that it was common for young men to ask their rebbeim, Torah mentors, for advice concerning how to talk to girls during the dating process, but rarely would ask for advice on how to speak to their wives during marriage. Now that is something to think about! The "holier than thou" attitude prevails among many after they get married. After all, they are the ones that are learning. Regrettably, they forget who is supporting them.

Horav Naftali Amsterdam, zl, preeminent disciple of Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, recounted that after his marriage, Rav Yisrael queried him whether he was fulfilling the mitzvah of gemilas chasadim, acts of loving-kindness. Assuming that he was referring to a gemach, free-loan fund, he responded that he did not have enough money to start such a fund. Rav Yisrael countered, "I did not mean that. After one is married, there are numerous opportunities for one to perform acts of kindness for his wife." All too often, we are prepared to save the world, but we forget our responsibilities at home. This suggests a new twist to the idea that charity begins at home.

On the second day Nesanel ben Tzuar, the Prince of Yissachar, brought near. (7:18)

Although each Nasi, prince, brought the same sacrifice, the Torah seeks to emphasize the importance of the independent declaration of each individual Nasi. Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl, infers from here the uniqueness of every individual and our responsibility to respect each and every Jew - regardless of his background or position. He cites the Rambam, who posits that to include all of the Nesiim under one blanket grouping would be to diminish the individual honor each one deserved. The Torah is very careful to show respect to every one of Hashem's creations - even inanimate ones. Regrettably, we think that respect is something that is manifest by those who themselves are of a lower echelon. If we peruse history and take the time to study the lives of our gedolim, Torah leaders, we will note an interesting phenomenon - it was specifically the great Torah giants who were meticulous in their respect for their fellow man. No one was personally too great - nor was anyone too small - to honor. A Jew is a Jew. He represents the Almighty in this world. He must be given his due respect.

It once happened that Horav Isser Zalmen Meltzer, zl, was speaking with a group of students in his home, when one of them saw the Brisker Rav, zl, entering the apartment building. He immediately announced to those assembled that the Brisker Rav was coming. When Rav Isser Zalmen heard this, he immediately ran to his room to change his kapata, frock, for his Shabbos frock, as befits greeting a dignitary. He ran quickly down the stairs, so that he could be there to greet the venerable sage. When he came to the door, he realized that his student had erred. The individual standing before him had an uncanny likeness to the Brisker Rav, but he certainly was not the Brisker Rav.

Rav Isser Zalmen did not skip a beat. He accorded to the simple Jew who stood before him the same visage and reverence that he was prepared to accord to the Brisker Rav. The visitor, of course, begged Rav Isser Zalmen to desist. "I am a simple Jew who has come for a letter of approbation, so that I can seek funds to marry off my daughter," he said. Immediately, Rav Isser Zalmen wrote an impressive letter for the man. When the visitor was ready to leave, Rav Isser Zalmen accompanied him down the stairs to the front door.

Afterwards, Rav Isser Zalmen explained to his students, "Just because he was not the person to whom I had originally intended to pay homage does not mean he does not deserve my respect. He is a Jew - and every Jew is worthy of honor. Furthermore, if Hashem caused it to occur that I should mistake him for the Brisker Rav, it proves that ultimately he was deserving of this honor."

The Manchester Rosh Hayeshiva, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, zl, relates a famous story which occurred with the Rashash, Horav Shmuel Shtershun, zl, one of the most distinguished Torah scholars in Vilna. His scholarly commentary on Mishnayos and Talmud are widely accepted and studied throughout the Torah world. Aside from being a great Torah scholar, Rav Shmuel also coordinated a gemach, free-loan fund. He once lent a member of the community the sizable sum of one hundred ruble to be returned in four months.

On the designated day, the borrower appeared at Rav Shmuel's home to discover that Rav Shmuel was studying in the bais hamedrash. He found the sage deeply engrossed in studying a difficult section of Talmud. Feeling very awkward, he interrupted, saying, "I have the money I owe you." "Fine, just put it down," Rav Shmuel said, as he took the envelope and placed it inside his volume of Talmud.

The next day as Rav Shmuel was reviewing his accounts, he noted with concern that the loan which he had made four months earlier for one hundred ruble had not been repaid. Apparently, he had been too engrossed in Torah study the previous day to remember what had occurred. He called the borrower to his home and asked for payment. The borrower, of course, declined after describing how just yesterday he had gone to the shul to repay the loan.

Rav Shmuel could not permit such a blatant denial to go by: after all, it was community money they were discussing. The borrower was sent a summons to appear before the rabbinical court to adjudicate the claim. As is regrettably common in some communities, the rumormongers began to do their malignant work. The borrower was disparaged and slandered. He was accused of everything from lying to stealing and worse. It became so unbearable that his only son, a fine, delicate young man, could not take the pressure and left town. He was humiliated by his father's "treachery."

On the day of the din Torah, Rav Shmuel was perusing a volume of Talmud when, lo and behold, he discovered the "non-existent" envelope. He was immediately filled with guilt and despair. What troubles he had caused the poor borrower. His name was now ruined in the community. His family was destroyed - all because he did not take the time to listen to him. He must throw himself at his feet and beg forgiveness for the tragedy that he had caused.

It was not so easy. The borrower said, "What will I gain by forgiving you? No one will believe me anymore. I am the liar who was accused by the Rashash! I have lost everything. Wait, there is one way to prove that you really forgive me and publicly assert that you believe it was all a mistake. If you give your daughter to my son in marriage, I will forgive you. This way everybody will believe that I am not a thief."

Rav Shmuel immediately accepted the condition and the shidduch, match, was made.

Horav Yitzchak Shraga Gross, Shlita, in his sefer, Chaim Sheyeish Bahem, infers two lessons from this narrative. First, we should look for merit in every Jew. Accentuate the positive, look for the positive. Do not think the worst of a person just because circumstantial evidence "seems" to point in that direction. Second, one who hurts another Jew - even accidentally - must seek every possible way to appease him. Rav Segal supplements this with another lesson. The Rashash was a distinguished Torah scholar, a man of means and great intelligence. He could have had any young man from the finest yeshivah for his daughter. Yet, in order to spare someone from shame, he accepted a simple young man from a common background. Rav Segal conjectures that perhaps this was the reason his seforim received such unparalleled acceptance in the Torah world. Last, I was impressed by the Rashash's daughter, who immediately listened to her father and entered into matrimony with this young man. Her father directed - and she listened. My, how life was different in those days.

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From: National Council of Young Israel [YI_Torah@lb.central.com] Sent: June 09, 2003 3:19 PM To: List Member Subject: Dvar Torah Parshat Naso Parshat Naso 14 Sivan 5763 June 14, 2003 Daf Yomi: Zevachim 5 Guest Author:

RABBI JAY YAAKOV SCHWARTZ

Young Israel of Oceanside, NY

THE PRICE OF A BLESSING The story is told of a certain Hasid who requested a bracha from the holy Magid, Rabbi Abraham of Trisk. The holy Magid customarily received a small sum of money prior to bestowing his blessings. The Magid said "give your donation and then I will bless you". The Hasid responded, "Rebbe if I have nothing to offer you am I not still worthy of a blessing?" The Magid answered wryly, using the first words of the priestly blessing contained in this week's Torah reading. "YIVARECHACHA HASHEM (G-d will bless you)".

The Hasid questioned "why is it that he who offers a donation, the Rebbe gives them a bracha but to me only HaShem gives the bracha?" The Magid responded "thus is written in the Torah "KO SEVACHUO ES BNEI YISROEL". If it is KO meaning "like this", without the payment, then follows the rest of the verse EMOR LAHEM YIVARECHACHA HASHEM (Say to them 'HaShem will bless you.')

A similar episode is recorded in the writings of other Hasidic greats such as the Magid of Tchernobel and others. The story is difficult to comprehend. I don't believe that the Magid's motivation was purely financial, if so, it would be unflattering that this conversation be recorded for posterity. It may be understood as a bit of sardonic humor but its message likely runs deeper than that. It would seem that the Magid's lesson is that a bracha requires one's investment of time, energy and effort and resources that are precious and dear to the supplicant, in order that the blessing requested have permanence and power. In a similar vein the story is told of two disciples of a certain Rebbe who longed for children and came for a bracha. The two arrived simultaneously.

The more devoted of the disciples, who came regularly and often to the Rebbe was received first. The other individual who came but rarely to visit the Rebbe was received later but it was he that later that year was blessed with a child. The more devoted Hasid complained bitterly why was it that the other fellow had seen the benefits from the Rebbe's blessing and he had not. The Rebbe explained the difference was a simple one saying, "my son, you both came requesting a child from the heavens and that I pray on your behalf. However, your friend and his wife prepared a nursery in their home in expectation of a child. But you did not".

These stories underscore the lesson that powerful prayers are only part of HaShem's equation of blessing. The other part is the demonstration of actions of investment and faith that prepare us and enable the bracha to be fulfilled.

This insight is the key to understanding the Birkat Kohanim. Rabbi Isaac Arama, the Akedat Yitzchak, explained the verse which summarizes the priestly blessing VASAMU ES SHMI AL BENEI YISRAEL (perek 6 pasuk 27).

He wrote, "in order that blessings be bestowed on man from HaShem he must prepare himself for it. The more he prepares and rectifies himself, so will he increase the outpouring of blessing that he will merit. It is like a river that is long but changes in shape from place to place. There are points along the river line that water flows abundantly and there are points along the river where the water flow is weak. A person might err in thinking that the volume of water in a certain place is dependent on how close or how far that place is from the source, of the river. A more astute observer will understand that it matters not how far you are from the source but rather what matters here is the dimensions and the condition of the area where the water arrives at that particular moment. So too, blessings from G-d are not dependent on how close one is to Him, but rather how great a repository for goodness one has prepared himself to be. As the pasuk says, "HARCHEV PICHA VAMALEHU". As we open up ourselves for a bracha we increase the brachas potential for fulfillment.

What is the way to prepare oneself to receive blessing? The pasuk teaches "HINEA EYN HASHEM EL YIREAV LAMEYACHALIM L'CHASDO". (Tehillim 33) HaShem's eye is trained on those who yearn for His kindness. One who understands and truly believes that HaShem is the source of all good and then takes actions to demonstrate that belief is best positioned to

receive G-d's munificence. This is the meaning of the verse VESAMU ES SHMI place My name in your hearts and your minds and with that clarity and the actions of faith then, V'ANI AVARCHEM, I will bless them...

In similar fashion, the Medrash Rabbah Breshis chapter 43-8 asks: "From where do the Jewish people merit the blessings of the Kohanim which begins with the word 'Ko' 'and thus you shall bless the Jewish people'?" The Medrash answers: "Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Nehemiah, and Rabbis, each opine differently.

Rabbi Yehuda says from Abraham about whom it says: 'KO YIHYEH ZARECHA', "And thus shall be your children" (Breshis 15-5). Rabbi Nehemiah says "From Isaac, about whom it is written, VAANI VHANAAR NELCHA AD KO' , "I and the lad will go to there". (Breshis 22-5) (to be bound and sacrificed). The Rabbis said from Jacob, as it is said 'KO TOMAR LBAIS YAAKOV' "Thus shall you teach the house of Yaakov" (Shemos 19-3).

The Medrash underscores that each of the Avos had to take dramatic action to secure the blessing of their progeny. For Avraham it was the challenge of believing that at 99 years old he would yet father another son as Rashi explains; "It was an act of tzdakah, (charity) and faith to believe HaShem's promise. The profound lesson of Abraham's lifetime of charitable activities", that inherent in every act of tzdakah, is an act of profound faith.

For Yitzchak it was the willingness to forego not only wealth, but also his very life and limb for the sanctification of G-d's name. In doing so, Isaac imbued all his descendants with the strength to not forfeit their faith in times of persecution, even in the face of danger and loss of life.

For Yakov it was the action of securing the next generation, the Bait Yakov defined rabbinically as the future mothers of Israel, to nurture their families with proper Torah education that would inspire them to raise yet another generation of Torah committed youth.

The Avos demonstrated that bracha does not come easily, that it requires great personal commitment of wealth, of time, of energy and of the willingness to work and encourage others to do the same.

I recently returned from a brief trip to the Ukraine to pray at the burial sites of some of Tzadikim who flourished there over 200 years ago. I traveled to Uman, the resting place of Rav Nachman and to Breslov to visit the kever (grave) of his most prominent student, Rav Nossan, the editor of all Rav Nachman's writings. I was privileged to reach Berditchev and pray at the Tzion (sepulchre) of Rav Levi Yitzchak, and at Mezibuz, the home of the illustrious founder of the Hasidic movement, the Bal Shem Tov .

I was honored to travel with a number of individuals who sought out an opportunity for joyous and fervent prayer, meditation and friendship. It was a journey that I will never forget and although it was marked with many technical difficulties and the lack of the normal conveniences available at home. I learned a valuable lesson on that four-day mission, on how little one really needs to be truly happy.

I appreciated the kindness and hospitality of so many people in those few days, especially the kindness of my beloved wife Chani and my Shul that enabled me to go. I felt truly blessed to have the chance to plead on behalf of myself, my family and Klal Israel (the Jewish people). The trip required money, time, effort, surrender of some creature comforts in order to merit these gifts but what I received, in terms of inspiration, a sense of connection to the Holy and a hope for a new and improved relationship with HaShem and with my fellows, was priceless.

The blessing that is bestowed via the Kohanim in Parshat Naso has three components: SHMIRAH: Which pertains to safeguarding and sanctifying our physical space and our bodily needs. CHEN: Which is the sanctity that involves our relations with our fellows. SHALOM: Which is the sanctity of our relationship with G-d Himself; whose presence is only fully revealed in the city that is SHALEM, Jerusalem.

None of these are achieved without effort or preparation. If we are to understand this lesson, that blessings are earned, we will open the possibility of receiving the full potential of HaShem's gifts that await us, if only we are willing to pay the price.

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From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent June 11, 2003 To: weekly-halachah@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Naso WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5763
By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav
MARRIED WOMEN WITH UNCOVERED HAIR

QUESTION: A married female guest at the Shabbos table does not have her hair covered. May Kiddush be recited in her presence or not?

DISCUSSION: According to Torah law, married women must cover their hair(1) whenever they are outside their home(2). Although a woman who fails to do so forfeits her kesubah and should technically be divorced by her husband(3), many poskim hold that nowadays, when many women erroneously, but sincerely, believe that they are not required to cover their hair, the husband is not required to divorce them since it is their ignorance, not their disregard for the Law, which leads them to sin unwittingly(4).] Since the hair must be covered, when it is not covered it is considered an ervah, an uncovered area. No male may recite Kerias Shema, pray, recite a blessing, or learn Torah when the uncovered hair is visible to him(5). Accordingly, if such a person happens to be at the Shabbos table, Kiddush may not be recited. Many theories have been postulated as to why some women - although meticulous in keeping other mitzvos - are lax in regard to covering their hair. Some do not cover their hair at all and others do so partially. It must be stressed that this practice is roundly condemned by all poskim. There is not a single, solitary authority who finds a leniency for married women to have their hair uncovered(6). Indeed, in recent years there has been a gradual improvement and many women who did not previously cover their hair, have begun to do so. In the last century or so, the many women who did not cover their hair presented a halachic problem. The previously mentioned halachah that a woman's uncovered hair is considered an ervah regarding Kerias Shema and all blessings, made it practically impossible for men to recite tefillos and blessings or to learn Torah in their own homes. A situation developed which was impossible to live with. Because of the prevalence of the problem, the Aruch ha-Shulchan(7) ruled that in a locale where the majority of married women do not cover their hair, we can no longer consider hair an ervah. In his opinion, only in a locale where most women keep their hair covered can uncovered hair be considered an ervah. This controversial ruling was accepted by some poskim(8) and strongly rejected by others(9). Harav M. Feinstein(10) ruled that one can rely on this leniency only under extenuating circumstances.

Concerning our case in point, therefore, the following guidelines are recommended:

1. If it is possible to explain the problem to the woman in private without embarrassing her, then that would be the preferred solution. 2. If it is difficult to do so, one should avert his face from her or close his eyes before reciting Kiddush. 3. If that is difficult, one can rely on the poskim who rule that under present-day conditions, women's hair is not considered an ervah. 4. If the woman sitting at the table is not Jewish, her uncovered hair is not considered an ervah(11). 5. If the woman at the table is not dressed properly [according to minimum halachic guidelines], then, too, the man saying Kiddush must avert his face or close his eyes(12). The Aruch ha-Shulchan's leniency does not apply to immodest dress.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Divorced or widowed women are also required to do so, although some poskim hold that their obligation is Rabbinic; see Igros Moshe E.H. 1:57. See Machazeh Eliyahu 118-120 for a complete discussion. 2 According to the Zohar and many poskim, women should cover their hair even in the privacy of their own homes; see Mishnah Berurah 75:14 and Beirur Halachah for more details. 3 Kesuvos 72a; E.H. 115:1-4. 4 See Igros Moshe E.H. 1:114; Doveiv Meishorim 1:124; Lev Avraham 1:105 quoting the Chazon Ish. 5 O.C. 75:2. This halachah applies to one's own wife, sister, mother, etc. as well. 6 There are some communities that have allowed women to expose the small portion of hair that protrudes from beneath the head covering. See Modesty, An Adornment for Life, pg. 236-240, who explains that this custom has no basis in Halachah and should be discontinued. It must be stressed, that even those who are lenient do not allow more than a total of 2 tefachim by less than half a tefach of hair to show (a tefach is approximately 3.5 inches). See Igros Moshe E.H. 1:58 and O.C. 4:112. 7 75:7. 8 Ben Ish Chai, Parashas Bo 12; Seridei Eish 2:14; Yabia Omer 6:13. 9 Mishnah Berurah 75:10; Chazon Ish O.C. 16:8 and most other poskim. 10 Igros Moshe O.C. 1:39,42,43; O.C. 3:23,24; E.H. 1:114. 11 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:15. 12 Mishnah Berurah 75:1; Chazon Ish O.C. 16:8. Not all poskim agree that closing one's eyes is sufficient in this situation.

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RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG

PARSHAT NASO & INTRODUCTION TO SEFER BAMIDBAR

Parshat Naso contains what appears to be a very strange progression of parshiot. After all, what logical connection exists between: * the duties of the Levim in chapter 4 * the laws of "korban chatat" and "sotah" in chapter 5 * the laws of "nazir" and "birkat kohanim" in chapter 6 & * the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan in chapter 7?

Certainly, if we use our imagination, we could find some tangential connection between each of these parshiot; but the fact remains - in simple "pshat" - these parshiot have almost nothing in common. So why does the Torah record them together? To your surprise, this week's shiur will NOT explain why they are indeed connected. Instead, we will do exactly the opposite - we will explain why these parshiot do NOT follow in logical progression! To understand why, we must consider the 'nuts & bolts' of Sefer Bamidbar. That means that we will analyze the sefer in search of its unifying theme. While doing so, we will uncover a rather fascinating pattern - unique to Sefer Bamidbar. A pattern that explains why many of its 'pieces' just don't seem to fit.

INTRODUCTION In our Parsha series thus far, our approach to the study of Chumash has been based on the assumption that each "sefer" carries a unique theme. To uncover those themes, we have studied the progression of 'parshiot' of each Sefer. [For a quick review, we could 'oversimplify' and summarize as follows: Breishit focused on BECHIRA, Shmot on GEULAH, and Vayikra on KEDUSHA.]

Following this methodology, we posit that we should be able to find a unifying theme for Sefer Bamidbar that will explain its structure. However, as we will see, finding such a theme for Sefer Bamidbar will be much more difficult, for the progression of many of its 'parshiot' appears to be rather arbitrary. To demonstrate this difficulty, we have already cited an example from Parshat Naso in our opening paragraph. Let's take another example from Parshat Shlach. After the story of the 'spies' (see chapters 13->14) we find a set of several totally unrelated mitzvot in chapter 15: * the laws of "nesachim" for korbanot * the laws of separating "challah" for dough * laws concerning korbanot "chatat" of the nation * the story of one who publicly defiled the sabbath * the mitzvah of tzizit * the story of Korach (in chapter 16), etc.

We could identify similar examples of what appears to be a rather random progression in Parshat Pinchas as well. .

To complicate matters, we also find that some of the mitzvot that are recorded in Sefer Bamidbar had already been mentioned in Sefer Vayikra! [e.g. 5:5-7 compare w/Vayikra 5:20-25] So what's going on in Sefer Bamidbar? In the following shiur we undertake a comprehensive analysis of the entire sefer that will help us understand the "pshat" of "drash" in Sefer Bamidbar!

DIVIDE & CONQUER Before we begin our analysis, we must differentiate between the two basic types of 'parshiot' that we encounter when we study Chumash in general, and in Sefer Bamidbar in particular:

1) NARRATIVE - i.e. the ongoing STORY of Chumash 2) COMMANDMENTS - i.e. the MITZVOT that G-d commands Bnei Yisrael to keep for all generations.

In our study of Chumash thus far we have shown how each "sefer" has been (primarily) either one, or the other. For example: * Sefer Breishit was primarily NARRATIVE - i.e. the STORY of the Creation and G-d's covenant with the Avot. * Sefer Shmot was also primarily NARRATIVE (the story of the Exodus, etc.), even though it included numerous mitzvot that were presented as an integral part of that narrative (e.g. the mitzvot given during Ma'amad Har Sinai). * Sefer Vayikra was primarily MITZVOT - presented in thematic order (even though it did include two very short narratives).

How about Sefer Bamidbar? As we will see, it definitely contains BOTH narrative and mitzvot. However, the relationship between its narrative and those mitzvot is rather confusing. To illustrate this point, the following table charts the progression of topics in Sefer Bamidbar, separating between its NARRATIVE (left column) and its MITZVOT (right column).

[Note that we have classified a special commandment given only for the generation in the desert (= "mitzvah l'sha'ah") as part of the narrative, in contrast to a commandment given for all generations (= "mitzvah l'dorot"). To clarify this distinction, here are a few examples: - MITZVOT L'SHA'AH: * Organizing the camp around the Mishkan (chapters 1->4) * sanctifying the Leviim (chapter 8) * travel and encampment following the "anan" (chapter 9). - MITZVOT L'DOROT: * the laws of "sotah" (chapter 5) * the laws of "nazir" (chapter 6) * the laws of "korbanot tmidim u'musafim" (chaps. 28->29).]

As you study this table, note the logical flow of its narrative in contrast to the 'random' progression of its mitzvot.

A CHART OF SEFER BAMIDBAR

chapter	THE STORY (narrative)	the MITZVOT (l'dorot)
1->4	Organizing the camp	
5	("sidur ha'machanot")	Korban "chatat"
		Laws of "sotah"
6		Laws of "nazir"
		"birkat kohanim"
7	Dedication of Mishkan	
8	The appointment of Leviim	
9	Offering Korban Pesach in the desert / Laws of Pesach Sheni Travelling following the "anan"	
10	Gathering camp by trumpet / "chatzotrot" Leaving Har Sinai (on 20th of Iyar)	
11	Complaints during the journey ("mitonim", "mitavim", etc.)	
12	Complaints against Moshe ("chet miriam")	
13	Sin of the 'spies' ("chet ha'm'raglim")	
14	The punishment: 40 years' wandering	
15		Laws of "shlamim", "challah", "chatat", "shabbat", & "tzizit".
16-17	Korach's rebellion	
18		Laws relating to the Kohen's reward for his service.
19		Laws of "umat meyt"
20-21	Events of the 40th year: death of Miriam; "mei mriva" incident; death of Aharon; conquest of Transjordan, etc.	
21-24	Story of Bilam & Balak	
25	Sin of Baal P'or and the act of Pinchas	
26	The census for inheriting the Land	
27	Transfer of leadership from Moshe->Yehoshua	
28-29		"korbanot tmidim u'musafim"
30		The laws of "nedarim"
31	War against Midyan	
32	Inheritance of Reuven & Gad	
33	Summary of the journey through the desert	
34-36	Laws in preparation for conquest and inheritance of the land ("nachalot", "arei miklat").	

Before you continue, review this table once again, noting how the narratives in the left hand column simply record the STORY of Bnei Yisrael's journey from Har Sinai (through the desert) until they reach Arvot Moav (some forty years later). In other words, once we 'filter out' the mitzvot in Sefer Bamidbar, that story becomes the primary topic of the Sefer. In this manner, Sefer Bamidbar appears to be quite similar in style to Sefer Shmot. Just as Sefer Shmot described Bnei Yisrael's journey from Egypt to Har Sinai - plus various MITZVOT, so too Sefer Bamidbar describes Bnei Yisrael's journey from Har Sinai towards Eretz Canaan - plus various MITZVOT. Nonetheless, in Sefer Bamidbar the relationship between those MITZVOT and the STORY is very different. In contrast to the "mitzvot l'dorot" in Sefer Shmot that form an integral part of its narrative, most of the "mitzvot l'dorot" in Sefer Bamidbar appear to be totally unrelated (or at most tangentially related) to its ongoing narrative.

To complicate matters, most of the "mitzvot l'dorot" recorded in Sefer Bamidbar relate in one form or other to the Mishkan, and hence seem to

'belong' in Sefer Vayikra! [Note how Ramban notes this phenomena in his intro. to Sefer Bamidbar.]

A 'BREAK IN THE ACTION... To appreciate this point, review the above table one more time, noting how a very interesting pattern emerges: The ongoing story in Sefer Bamidbar is periodically INTERRUPTED by certain MITZVOT, usually totally unrelated to that ongoing narrative. [To borrow a "mashal" from Television - the mitzvot of Sefer Bamidbar form a 'commercial break' that interrupt the flow of its narrative!]

This structure is unique to Sefer Bamidbar. To clarify this, let's compare this structure once again to the structures of Sefer Shmot and Sefer Vayikra. Sefer Shmot, although it also combines both MITZVOT and NARRATIVE, is fundamentally different than Sefer Bamidbar for its mitzvot constitute an INTEGRAL PART of its ongoing narrative! Let's explain: Sefer Shmot records the story of Bnei Yisrael's journey from Mitzraim until their arrival at Har Sinai. This includes the Exodus (chapters 1->13), the journey from Egypt until Har Sinai (chapters 14->17), Ma'amad Har Sinai, "chet ha'egel", and building the Mishkan (chapters 18->40). However, these stories include several events during which G-d commanded Bnei Yisrael to keep certain mitzvot. For example, as Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they are commanded to keep the mitzvot of Pesach and Chag Ha'matzot (that commemorate that event). At Ma'amad Har Sinai, they are given the Ten Commandments. In reaction to "chet ha'egel" (or to perpetuate Ma'amad Har Sinai), Bnei Yisrael are given the laws of the Mishkan. [Note as well that the mitzvot recorded in Parshat Mishpatim" (20:18-23:33) constitute the "sefer ha'brit" (see 24:3-7) over which Bnei Yisrael proclaim "na'aseh v'nishma" during the ceremony that took place at Har Sinai (see Ramban 24:7).] Hence we conclude that the MITZVOT in Sefer Shmot form an integral part of its ongoing narrative! Sefer Vayikra is quite the opposite for it contains primarily "mitzvot l'dorot" organized by topic ("kedushat ha'mishkan v'ha'am"/ or "torat kohanim"). In fact, the lone narrative that we do find in Sefer Vayikra - the dedication of the Mishkan (8:1- 10:10) - relates specifically to the topic of the mitzvah under discussion (i.e. korbanot).

In contrast to those two books, Sefer Bamidbar contains an ongoing narrative, however that narrative is periodically 'interrupted' by that are usually unrelated.

RAMBAN'S INTRODUCTION This analysis can help us understand the strange statement made by Ramban in his introduction to Sefer Bamidbar: "... and this book deals entirely with "MITZVOT SHA'AH" that applied only during Bnei Yisrael's stay in the desert..."; Then, three lines later, Ramban makes a very bold, yet puzzling, statement: "This book does NOT CONTAIN any MITZVOT L'DOROT (commandments for all generations) EXCEPT for a FEW MITZVOT DEALING WITH KORBANOT that the Torah began discussing in SEFER VAYIKRA, but did not finish their explanation there, and they are finished here instead." [see Ramban 1:1]

Note how Ramban differentiates between two types of mitzvot that are found in Sefer Bamidbar, one type - "mitzvot l'sha'ah" DO belong in the sefer, while the other type - "mitzvot l'dorot" DON'T! This distinction between 'parshiot' that DO belong and DO NOT belong implies that Sefer Bamidbar indeed carries one primary theme, i.e. the story of Bnei Yisrael's forty year journey from Sinai to Arvot Moav. The stories and the "mitzvot sha'ah" that relate to that topic - 'belong' in the sefer, while those mitzvot that are unrelated to that topic do not! [Note that even though the Ramban did not preface his introduction to Sefer Bamidbar with 'questions for preparation', he clearly expected that the reader was aware of this overall structure (based on the above table)! Note as well that Ramban never explicitly defines the primary topic of Sefer Bamidbar, however he does mention that: This book contains... the miracles that were performed for Bnei Yisrael and how He began to deliver their enemies before them... and He commanded them how the Land should be divided among the tribes..]

With this background, the primary theme of the NARRATIVE of Sefer Bamidbar becomes very easy to define - Bnei Yisrael's journey from Har Sinai towards the Promised Land. It divides into several distinct sections: Chapters 1->10 - how Bnei Yisrael prepare for that journey; Chapters 11->25 - why they don't make it (i.e. their sins); and Chapters 26->35 - how the next generation prepares to enter. How about the MITZVOT L'DOROT of Sefer Bamidbar? Are they simply random, or do they share a common theme? At first glance, most of these mitzvot appear to be totally unrelated to Bnei Yisrael's journey through the desert. WHERE DO THEY ALL BELONG? Before we suggest an answer to this question, let's review this list of mitzvot in Sefer Bamidbar, and attempt to

determine where they DO BELONG. After a quick glance at the list in the right hand column of the above table - the answer is quite obvious - most all of them belong in Sefer VAYIKRA. Take for example: * Parshat "sotah" (5:11-31) and Parshat "nazir" (6:1-21): Both contain "torot" (ritual procedures) for Korbanot (see 5:29 & 6:21). Thus (as we explained in previous shiurim) these parshiot belong with the other "torot" found in the first half of Vayikra. * Parshat "parah adumah" (chapter 19): belongs in Parshiot Tazria/Metzora, together with the presentation of all of the other laws of how one becomes "tamey" and the necessary procedures to become "tahor". * The laws of "korbanot tmidim u'musafim" (chaps. 28->29): belong with the chagim in "Emor" (Vayikra 23 / note that on each holiday mentioned in Emor we must bring an "ishe rayach nichoach l'hashem". Sefer Bamidbar details the specific "ishe" (korban) which must be brought for each chag. (See Vayikra 23:37)

Thus, it appears as though Chumash has deliberately taken parshiot which could have been in Sefer Vayikra and 'randomly' placed them throughout the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar! But - why would the Torah take a mitzvah which 'belongs' in one sefer and move it to another? One might suggest that these 'unrelated parshiot' are recorded in Sefer Bamidbar for the 'technical' reason that they just happened to have been given to Moshe Rabeinu at this time (i.e. during the journey from Har Sinai through the desert). For example, the mitzvah of "shiluach tmayim" (5:1-4) - sending unclean persons outside the camp - most likely was commanded only after the camp was organized (chaps. 1->4). [This most likely would be Ramban's answer, for he maintains that all of Chumash follows in chronological order ["yeish mukdam u'muchar..."] Note however that Rashi notes that this mitzvah was given a month earlier, i.e. on the first of Nisan - on the day of "hakamat ha'Mishkan".]

Nonetheless, this approach would explain only a few of these parshiot, for most of the "mitzvot l'dorot" in Bamidbar had most probably been given at an earlier time (most likely on Har Sinai or after "hakamat ha'Mishkan"). For example, the laws of "tumat meyt" (chapter 19) must have been given before the Mishkan was erected, otherwise it would have been impossible for the Kohanim to perform the "avodah". Furthermore, certain mitzvot recorded in Bamidbar had already been mentioned earlier in Chumash (e.g. see 5:5-8 / compare with Vayikra 5:20-26). Hence it would seem that this 'commercial break' type pattern in Sefer Bamidbar is deliberate! And thus, our question must be re-worded to: why does the Torah employ this unique structure in Sefer Bamidbar?

THE PSHAT OF DRASH! If this special structure of Bamidbar is deliberate, then the obvious temptation is to find a connection, even if only tangential, between these 'unrelated mitzvot' and the juxtaposed narrative in Sefer Bamidbar. In fact, this pattern may be the "pshat" of "drash". In other words, the Torah deliberately juxtaposes certain parshiot, EVEN THOUGH they were given at different times, and even though they are unrelated, IN ORDER that we search for a thematic connection between them! Thus, through this special structure the Torah may be telling us to look for the 'drash' behind this juxtaposition. In this manner, the unique style of Sefer Bamidbar challenges us to find a THEMATIC connection between these "mitzvot l'dorot" and the ongoing story. This also explains why so often the commentaries ask the famous question: "lama nis'm'cha..." (why are certain parshiot juxtaposed...?). The Torah is TELLING US to ask this question.

Therefore, when we study Sefer Bamidbar, we should not be surprised to find certain parshiot of mitzvot that don't seem to belong. Nonetheless, we are 'obligated' to attempt to uncover a more subtle message that the Torah may be transmitting through the intentional juxtaposition of these mitzvot to its narrative. With this background, we will now suggest some possible reasons for the inclusion of these specific parshiot of mitzvot in Parshat Naso, even though they could have been recorded in Sefer Vayikra as well.

SHCHINA IN THE CAMP The first topic of Sefer Bamidbar is the organization of the camp ("sidur ha'machanot") surrounding the Mishkan (chaps. 1->4). As we explained last week, this re-organization of the camp stresses the importance of the interdependent relationship between the camp and the Mishkan, i.e. between the nation and the Kohanim & Leviim.

This may explain the reason why Sefer Bamidbar chose to include the parshiot which follow: A) "shiluach tmayim" (5:1-4) As the camp was organized with the "shchinah" dwelling at its center, the first mitzvah is to remove anyone who is "tamey" from the camp.

B) "gezel ha'ger". (5:5-10) Here we find laws that reflect the special relationship between the nation and the Kohanim. This mitzvah begins

with the standard law of the Korban Asham as explained in Parshat Vayikra (5:20-26). The halacha requires that prior to bringing the Korban, the transgressor must first repay the person ("keren v'chomesh"). This parsha describes the case when the payment is given to the Kohen, i.e. when the person who is owed the money has passed away and left no inheritors (see Rashi 5:8). The parsha continues with a general statement regarding the legal ownership of tithes which the nation must give to the Kohanim (see 5:9-10).

C) Parshat Sotah (5:11-31) Here again we find a special relationship between the Mishkan and the nation, as the Kohen is instrumental in solving problems in a marital relationship. Even though this is a "korban mincha", its nature is quite different from those mentioned in Sefer Vayikra (see Ramban 5:9).

D) Parshat Nazir (6:1-21) Here we find a case where a member of the nation takes upon himself laws similar to those of a Kohen (see 6:6-8), as well as the 'kedusha' of a Kohen. Note also the similarity between the Korban which the "nazir" must bring (6:13-21) and the special Korbanot brought by the Kohanim during the 7 day "milium" ceremony (8:1-30).

E) Birkat Kohanim (6:22-27) The blessing which the Kohanim bestow on the nation is yet another example of the connection between the Kohanim and the camp. The Kohanim serve as vehicle through which G-d can bless His people.

TRAVELLING WITH THE "SHCHINA" Why are specifically parshiot from Sefer Vayikra woven into Sefer Bamidbar? This structure of Bamidbar may reflect a 'way of life'. In our study of Sefer Vayikra, we explained how the kedusha of the Mishkan (first half of Vayikra) affects the kedusha of the entire nation (second half). This fundamental concept is now applied to Sefer Bamidbar. The Torah periodically interrupts its detail of the journey of Bnei Yisrael through the desert with mitzvot that deal with the special connection between the Kohanim and the nation.

As the nation leaves Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael begin to deal with mundane tasks such as preparation for the conquest of the Land. At the same time they must constantly remind themselves of their spiritual goals, symbolized by the Mishkan at the center of the camp. shabbat shalom, menachem