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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON NASO - 5786

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### Sifsei Chaim – Rav Chaim Friedlander

#### The Nazir from the South

Summarized by CS

#### *Shimon Hatzadik and the Nazir from the South*

The Gemara in Nedarim 9b state תניא אמר שמעון הצדיק מימי לא אכלתי אשם נזיר טמא אלא אחד פעם אחת בא אדם אחד נזיר מן הדרום וראיתו שהוא יפה עינים וטוב רואי וקווצותיו סדורות לו תלתלים אמרתי לו בני מה ראית להשחית את שערך זה הנאה אמר לי רועה הייתי לאבא בעירי הלכתי למלאות מים מן המעיין ונסתכלתי בבבואה שלי ופחו עלי יצרי ובקש לטורדני מן העולם אמרתי לו רשע למה אתה מתגאה בעולם שאינו שלך במי שהוא עתיד להיות רמה ותולעה העבודה שאגלחך לשמים מיד עמדתי ונשקתיו על ראשו אמרתי לו בני כמוך ירבו נזירי נזירות בישראל עליך הכתוב אומר איש כי יפליא לנדור נדר נזיר להזיר Shimon HaTzaddik never ate from the טומאה of a Nazir until one day, when he met a young nazir traveling from the South who possessed beautiful eyes, a handsome face, and thick, curly hair. When Shimon HaTzaddik asked why he'd destroy such striking beauty, the young man answered: he was simply his father's shepherd, but everything changed when he went to draw water from a spring and caught his own reflection. His יצר הרע immediately flared up and tried to drive him from the world. The young man fought back, telling the inclination it shouldn't take pride in a world

BS"D

that isn't its own. He reminded it that the flesh will eventually become worms and maggots. Right then, he swore by the Temple service to shave his head לשמים as a Nazir. Deeply moved, Shimon HaTzaddik stood up, kissed his head, and prayed Israel would see many more nezirim just like him.

To fight the יצר הרע, a battle that involves מוח ולב (intellect and heart), we must identify the יצר הרע from its very beginning and distance it while it remains in its hidden, early stage. The Torah teaches us to fight it right at this starting point. This is the only way to stop the יצר הרע early on.

#### *Distancing the יצר הרע*

Parshas Nazir teaches us how to distance ourselves from the יצר הרע, as we don't want to give it an opening. Chazal state in Berachos 63a that someone who sees a suspected sotah in her disgrace should stop drinking wine. Seeing her provides an opening for the יצר הרע and a person must look at what caused her serious sin. How do we close this opening? The Gemara explains that taking a vow of nezirus helps, because the nazir must build a protective fence against sin. The pasuk in Naso 6:2 איש או אשה כי יפליא לנדור נדר נזיר להזיר לה' discusses a person clearly utters a vow. The Ibn Ezra explains this means he separates himself or does something wondrous יפליא while most people simply follow their physical desires. When he completes his Nezirus it is a נזר אל-קיו על ראשו. The Sforno comments on Naso 6:13, a verse stating the nazir shall bring himself to the entrance of the Ohel Moed when his vow is complete, that when person attains a level of holiness like the כהן גדול when he removes himself from physical desires, thereby meriting to elevate himself.

The Ramban explains why the nazir must bring a קרבן חטאת when his successful term ends. The nazir shouldn't return to worldly desires after drawing close to God, and he's considered a sinner when he returns to these physical cravings. A person becomes holy when separating from wine and desires, and he really should remain a holy nazir his entire life.

#### *Confronting False Pride*

The Netziv analyzes the young Nazir from the south's words ופחו עלי rising within him. The Netziv analyzes the young Nazir from the south's words ופחו עלי יצר הרע rising within him. Its source was fear or weakness stemming from his thoughts, as seeing his handsome reflection in the water could easily lead to גאווה (arrogance). He sensed how this arrogance would create a dangerous chain reaction that sought to drive him from the world. Arrogance removes a person from the world because it serves as the root of all sins. The young man had to cry out to stand against the strong pull of יצר הרע.

Chazal teach in Berachos 5a that יצר טוב על יצר הרע a person should always stir up the יצר טוב against the יצר הרע. We must actively reveal the true, evil face of what seems good right now. The man from the South felt this declaration was his only escape. He knew arrogance happens when a person's heart becomes haughty and forgets God, as stated in Deuteronomy 8:14. An arrogant person mistakenly takes credit for things that actually belong to God. A person disconnects from God when they take pride in physical traits, since it's a world that isn't yours. There's no logical reason to feel arrogance over a physical body that will decay, and expensive garments don't give a person independent value.

#### *Shaving for the Sake of Heaven*

The young man used the language of a vow when he promised to shave for the sake of Heaven. He did this to resist the temptation of

his hair and avoid arrogance, recognizing he'd just be showing off his hair again if he merely got a normal haircut.

He needed the strict rules of a neder nezirus to guarantee he would use his physical appearance for a mitzvah instead of vanity. He accepted the separation of his body from the power of his hair, realizing his hair wasn't really his, and he therefore returned it to God. The hair itself is eventually burned under the pot of the peace-offering, as described in Numbers 6:18.

The Maharal explains this concept in Nesivos Olam (Nesiv HaAnavah, chapter 1). Sacrifices show that everything belongs to God, and a person shows that an animal was created to serve God when bringing it as a sacrifice. The same applies to the nazir's hair, as he returns his physical power to God by accepting this mitzvah. The young man transformed the cause of a potential sin into holiness. He taught us to create holiness by (i) turning away from evil, (ii) actively doing good, and (iii) recognizing God's ultimate ownership. He knew a vow acts like a strong lock against הרע יצר. A simple haircut wouldn't be enough, so the strict mitzvah of shaving the head as a nazir gave him the tools he needed to win.

#### *The True Greatness of Man*

Shimon HaTzaddik immediately kissed the young man's head and hoped there would be more people like him in Israel. The nazirite vow is deeply connected to the head, as the main physical restriction involves not cutting the hair on the head.

The head is the highest part of the body and represents human greatness. A person reveals true greatness when realizing their beauty comes entirely from God. The Talmud in Chullin 89a states that one who makes himself small is actually great. A person who recognizes his smallness connects to God's greatness, while someone who considers himself great is truly small. He simply doesn't understand true greatness.

We can't just turn away from evil and leave an opening for הרע יצר, so we must fill our hearts with Torah and good deeds. The Rambam writes about this in Hilchos Issurei Biah 22:21, stating a person should turn his thoughts to Torah and broaden his mind with wisdom. Immoral thoughts only overpower a heart that is empty of wisdom, and Proverbs 5:19 reminds us we should always be intoxicated with the love of Torah wisdom.

#### **Birkas Kohanim**

Adopted based on **Nechama Leibowitz's** essay in בספר במדבר עיונים by C. Shulman

Birkas Kohanim, in parshas Naso, is among the most familiar passages in the Torah, but its familiarity can obscure its precision. Its three short pesukim are not merely three poetic ways of saying that Hashem should bless Israel. They form a carefully ordered ascent: from material blessing to protection, from Divine illumination to Chein, and from Divine favor to Shalom. Through the classic mefarshim and Chazal, the blessing emerges as a compact statement of what a full human blessing really requires.

The opening words, וישמרך, יברכך ה' וישמרך, begin with the most basic human need. Rashi explains יברכך ה' as יברכך, שיתברכו נכסידך, *that your possessions should be blessed*. On this reading, the first blessing is not abstract spirituality, but the plain blessing of material increase. Yet the Torah immediately adds וישמרך, *and may He guard you*. Rashi explains that one who receives possessions needs protection from loss, theft, and damage. The blessing therefore contains its own qualification: having

more is not enough. Wealth that is not guarded may disappear, or worse, may become a source of anxiety and danger.

Sforno deepens the meaning of וישמרך. It is not enough for Hashem to give ברכה; the blessing itself must be guarded so that it remains good for the recipient. Material success can become a nisayon, and prosperity may bring arrogance, distraction, rivalry, or spiritual decline. Thus, וישמרך is not merely protection from thieves or external loss, as in Rashi's simpler reading. It is protection from the dangers that may come through the blessing itself. Haamek Davar develops a similar point with a slightly different emphasis: the concern is not only that the blessing may be lost, but that it may generate new spiritual vulnerability unless Hashem preserves the person within the blessing. The Torah therefore begins with material good, but immediately teaches that even good must be guarded, disciplined, and kept within the service of Hashem.

The second pasuk, ויאר ה' פניו אליך ויהנך, moves from the protection of material blessing to the blessing of Divine illumination. Many mefarshim understand this second blessing as a gift of spiritual abundance, while the first blessing concerned material abundance. The phrase ויאר ה' פניו אליך is therefore not merely a metaphor for success. The Sifri explains it as יתן מאור תורה, *may He give you the light of Torah*, so that one's eyes and heart are illuminated in Torah, as in כי נר מצוה ותורה אור. Rashi, however, explains the phrase as יראה פנים צהובות, *may He show you a smiling face, a radiant face*. The blessing is that Hashem's countenance should be turned toward the person in warmth, light, and favor.

ויהנך then describes what flows from that Divine illumination. Rashi explains it simply as יתן לך חן, meaning that Hashem should grant the person favor, the quality of being received graciously and looked upon favorably. Ibn Ezra reads it as a gracious response to need: if a person turns to Hashem in distress, Hashem should show חסד and grant his request. Chazal deepen the word further. The Sifri connects ויהנך with דעת ובינה, echoing דעת ומלמד לאנוש בינה. Yet this דעת is not merely intellectual achievement. The Midrash adds, יתן לך חן, *may He place in you daas so that you will be gracious to one another and merciful to one another*. In this way, ויהנך becomes the human result of ויאר ה' פניו אליך: one who receives מאור פנים from Hashem is meant to become capable of showing חן and רחמים to others.

The third pasuk, וישא ה' פניו אליך וישם לך שלום, opens with the most difficult phrase in the blessing. וישא פנים can suggest favoritism, yet the Torah elsewhere insists that Hashem does not show improper favoritism. Rashi therefore avoids reading the phrase as favoritism and explains וישא ה' פניו אליך as יכבדו כעסו, *may He suppress His anger*. This follows the direction of the Midrash, which reads it as יעביר כעסו ממך, *may He remove His anger from you*. On this reading, the פנים are not yet a smiling face of favor, but a face of anger that is withdrawn or restrained.

Other parshanim read the phrase differently. Ibn Ezra and Rashbam explain וישא ה' פניו אליך as Hashem turning His face toward the person in favor, while Chizkuni explains it as יסביר לך פנים, *may He show you a pleasant face*, bringing success and protection. The phrase פנים can carry different meanings in Tanach, sometimes anger, sometimes presence, sometimes favor. In this pasuk, especially because it concludes וישם לך שלום, the phrase points toward Hashem's gracious turning to Israel.

The theological problem nevertheless remains, because Chazal ask how Hashem can be described as נושא פנים when the Torah says He does not show favoritism. The Gemara answers that Israel itself goes beyond the strict legal measure: although the Torah says ואכלת ושבעת and וברכת, they recite Birkas Hamazon even after a כביצה or כזית. The point is not that Hashem abandons דין. Rather, when Israel lives לפנים, Hashem responds with a corresponding נשיאת פנים. Divine favor here is not arbitrary preference, but covenantal closeness that goes beyond cold legal calculation without becoming injustice. The blessing ends with וישם לך שלום, because Shalom is the completion and vessel of all the earlier blessings. Chazal teach that after food, drink, and material plenty, if there is no peace, there is nothing; only after ונתתי שלום בארץ is the blessing complete. This is why Rashi, on Bechukosai, says that שלום is הכל כנגד הכל, *equal to everything*. Shalom is not merely the absence of conflict. It is wholeness, harmony, and the condition that allows blessing to endure.

Abarbanel's reading clarifies the architecture of the whole unit. The three pesukim are not parallel blessings placed side by side, but a progression. The first concerns worldly good and its preservation. The second concerns illumination, Chein, and the experience of Divine favor. The third reaches the highest point, Hashem's gracious turning toward Israel and the gift of Shalom. This structure also appears in the form of the pesukim themselves: three words, then five, then seven. The blessing expands as it ascends; its form mirrors its meaning.

The repeated use of Hashem's Name is equally central: יברכה ה', יאר ה' ישא ה'. Every line identifies Hashem as the source of the blessing. This guards against a mistaken view of the Kohanim. They do not possess independent sacred power, and they are not the origin of ברכה. Their task is ושמנו את שמי על בני ישראל, to place Hashem's Name upon Israel. The conclusion, ואני אברכם, makes the theology explicit: the Kohanim speak, but Hashem blesses. Some mefarshim understand ואני אברכם as referring to the blessing of Israel, while others see it as also including blessing for the Kohanim who bless Israel. Either way, the essential point is the same. Human beings may transmit the words of blessing, but only Hashem can make blessing real.

The result is a full ladder of blessing. Rashi anchors the opening phrase in ordinary material life. Sforno and Haamek Davar show that material blessing must itself be guarded so that it remains spiritually safe. The Sifri and Midrashim raise the second blessing into the realm of Torah, דעת, בינה, חן, רהמים, and רחמים. Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Chizkuni, and Rabbeinu Bachya refine the meaning of Divine פנים. Chazal resolve the difficulty of וישא ה' פניו by linking Divine favor to Israel's own משורת הדין לפנים. Abarbanel highlights the progressive structure, and the teaching about Shalom explains why peace must be the final word. Birkas Kohanim therefore teaches Israel what to desire: not wealth alone, not protection alone, not spiritual light alone, but a life in which every gift from Hashem is guarded, illuminated, gracious, morally ordered, and gathered into Shalom.

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to: ravfrand@torah.org date: May 28, 2026, 10:45 Rav Frand  
Parshas Naso

**Manoach Was Given a Lesson As How To Raise His Son**  
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi

Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: Parshas Naso #1383 Birchas Kohanim – Whose Mitzva Is It? Good Shabbos!

*Manoach Was Given a Lesson As How To Raise His Son*

In past years, I have shared a beautiful observation from Rav Shimon Schwab, z"l. I want to repeat this observation and add some very interesting additional insights that I recently found.

The Haftorah for Parshas Naso is the famous story of the birth of Shimshon, the Nazir. A malach (angel) comes to Manoach's wife and tells her that although she is currently barren, she will become pregnant and have a son. She is warned not to consume wine or eat "tameh" (ritually unclean) food. Her son is to be a nazir from the womb for his entire life, and he will deliver Yisrael from the hands of the Plishtim.

The woman relays this message to her husband. Manoach then davens to Hashem to resend the malach to instruct them specifically how to deal with this to-be-born special child. Hashem answers Manoach's prayers and the malach returns. After confirming that this was the same malach who had spoken earlier with his wife, Manoach asks the malach "Tell me, what are we to do with this child?" The malach basically repeats the same message that he had earlier shared with Manoach's wife: "Whatever I told your wife, that is what you should do..."

Rav Schwab asks three very basic questions: Did Manoach not know the laws of nezirus? And even if he did not know them (the Talmud in fact says that Manoach was an am ha'aretz.), was it necessary to find a malach to teach Manoach the laws of nezirus?

Why did the Ribono shel Olam answer Manoach's tefilla? Normally, Hashem does not send malachim around at the drop of a hat!

What did the malach add in his response to Manoach? Apparently, the malach just repeated the same answer over again that he had already told to Manoach's wife a day or two earlier!

Rav Schwab makes a brilliant observation that is a basic principle in raising children. He interprets Manoach's question to the malach as follows: How can I raise a child who is a nazir if I myself do not observe the practices of a nazir? The boy will see his father having his grapes and drinking wine. Why will he agree to abstain from these sweet delicacies himself?

Rav Schwab explains that the malach's response was as follows: Manoach, guess what? You need to become a nazir yourself! He bases this on a grammatical inference which is echoed by the Meshech Chochma in this very parsha: The malach tells Manoach: "All that I said to the woman, tishamare (shall be observed)." Tishamere can either mean "she shall keep" or "you shall keep." This, Rav Schwab says, is what the malach added when he returned a second time to speak with Manoach. The first time he said only "She shall keep (the laws of nezirus)." The second time, he is telling Manoach that he too must observe those laws. (Everything that I told her, you shall keep as well!)

This is a fine example of the old educational principle that "Do as I say, not as I do" never works! Therefore, in order to create a nazir in your family, you need to be a nazir as well.

Thus far, I shared the words of Rav Schwab, and as I mentioned, the Meshech Chochmah very briefly says the same thing. Now, I will share a pshat in a Rashi and an incredible Seforno.

The last pasuk in this week's parsha says: "And when Moshe came

into the Ohel Moed to speak with Him, he heard the voice communicating with him from atop the cover that was upon the Ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim, and He spoke to him.” There is a strange word in this pasuk: meedaber. Typically, the pasuk would say “and he heard the voice of Hashem midaber Elav (talking to Him), with a shva under the mem. What is this word, meedaber? Rashi comments and says that meedaber is equivalent to misdaber (a hispael (reflexive) verb, which conveys doing an action to oneself, meaning that the Ribono shel Olam was talking to Himself). The idea is that the Ribono shel Olam was not talking to Moshe Rabbeinu, but rather Moshe Rabbeinu overheard a conversation between the Ribono shel Olam and Himself. It may be possible to interpret Rashi differently, but the Seforno in this week’s parsha says an amazing thing: On the words meedaber eilav, the Seforno comments “medaber beino l’bein atzmo” (The Ribono shel Olam was speaking to Himself and Moshe Rabbeinu was listening in). The Seforno explains: “If someone wants to have an effect on someone else, he must practice what he preaches.” He needs to preach the lesson to himself and become the object of his own instructions. That is how a person has an effect on people. The Seforno is saying that Hashem was talking to Himself. He was saying over to Himself the whole Torah: “You shall be holy.” “You shall not sow mixed seeds.” This is the way a person has an effect on other people.

I don’t know if I would have ever come up with this pshat in the Seforno itself but there is a sefer from Rav Schach, zt”l, in which Rav Schach says the same thing:

When someone speaks to someone else and wishes to have his words have an effect on that person, it is necessary for the speaker to not only “talk the talk” but it is necessary for him to also “walk the walk.” It is impossible for someone who himself is somewhat lacking in yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven) to preach Yiras Shamayim to others! Likewise, someone cannot chastise another person for not learning Torah with proper intensity when he himself is weak in this area. Rav Schach here cites both the aforementioned Rashi and Seforno.

The way to have an effect on others is to act that way yourself. The Ribono shel Olam sent that message to Klal Yisrael by virtue of the fact that when Moshe came into the Ohel Moed, Hashem was not talking to Moshe, but rather, as it were, Hashem was talking to Himself. The message being sent here is that the only way to have an effect on people is to become those people yourself.

To add to this, there is an interesting Baal Haturim in Parshas Beshalach. When Moshe Rabbeinu is supposed to split the sea, he is told “Lift your staff.” The Baal Haturim notes that the word harem (lift) only appears three times in all of Tanach:

“lift your staff” (in Parshas Beshalach) (Shemos 14:16),

“kashofer horeim kolecha ” (like a Shofar lift your voice) (Yeshaya 58:1), and “horeim loch” (lift yourself) (Melachim II 6:7).

What do these three appearances of this word have in common? I saw a vort from the Kedushas Tzion, one of the Bobover Rebbes. He says an amazing thing: There are three ways to have an effect on children: #1 Lift the staff (i.e. – don’t spare the rod); #2 Lift your voice. Both of these techniques can be effective but they may have adverse effects in the long run. But number three is harem loch – Lift yourself up. When you lift yourself up (as a role model), that has the most effective impact on children. Again, this means not only “talk

the talk” but also “walk the walk.” We saw this and learn this from none less a personage than the Ribono shel Olam Himself. Meedaber Eilav. Hashem talks to Himself and thus teaches Moshe Rabbeinu. The best way to reach is to raise yourself and become the best possible example to the child.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

DavidATwersky@gmail.com Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas’ Nasso is provided below: 059 Sheitel: A Woman’s Obligation to Cover Her Hair 103 Birchas Kohanim 148 Sotah: The Case of the Unfaithful Wife 195 Birchas Kohanim: Who Can and Who Can’t? 241 Yichud and the Housekeeper 285 Sa’ar B’isha Ervah 331 NassoMust A Kallah Cover Her Hair at the Chasunah? 375 Ain Osin Mitzvos Chavilos and many, many more A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

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If I Hate Myself I Need the World to Love Me

### **The Narcissist & the Nazirite: Narcissism in Greek Mythology and the Talmud**

**By: Rabbi YY Jacobson**

The Golfers

A rabbi, a teacher, a millionaire, and a narcissist were golfing together.

As they walked the course, they came up behind a foursome that was moving very slowly, and that didn’t offer to let them play through. Calling over the club pro, the foursome inquired about the slow group’s poor sportsmanship. The pro explained that the slow golfers were blind. The rabbi said: Oh, G-d bless them, I will keep them in my prayers. The teacher said, I will tell my students how inspiring they are. The millionaire said, "I will offer to pay their green fees for the year." The narcissist said, "Why do they have to play by day and occupy the field? If they're blind anyway, why can't they play at night?"

This little anecdote describes the narcissist, the person who sees the entire world as a mirror.

The Definition

The term “Narcissism” was first coined by Henry Havelock Ellis, a British physician and scientist living in the 19th century, and then explained by Dr. Sigmund Freud in his book “On Narcissism,” published in 1914.

It was the Jewish Austrian-American psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut who first coined the phrase “NSD,” Narcissistic Personality Disorder, in 1968, describing a person who needs endless admiration and adulation; experiences a sense of superiority toward others; feels that all his expectations must be met. This person is always ready to use people to meet his goals and will have no issues lying in order to self-inflate and discuss his accomplishments. He also does not know how to show empathy to others. This person often has wide, fast

mood swings and will fantasize about unlimited success, money, and power. He can be explosive, abusive, needs his world to be perfect, and wants everyone to love him.

There are both overt and covert narcissists. The covert ones are beloved and appreciated, but are secretly selfish, calculating, controlling, angry, and vindictive. Covert narcissists create an illusion of selflessness while gaining from their elevated status. Although they share similar basic traits with the overt narcissist, i.e., the need for attention and recognition, they are stealthier about hiding their egocentric motives. These narcissists can trick others, sometimes even themselves, into believing they are altruistic and empathetic individuals.

The fascinating thing is that many narcissists are not even aware that they are narcissistic. It is deeply etched into the subconscious of their psyche, and it is the only way of life they know.

Today, we want to examine two stories on the theme of narcissism—one in Greek literature, the other in the Talmud.

#### The Myth of Narcissus

Where does the term “Narcissism” come from?

Henry Havelock Ellis retrieved it from Greek mythology. The Greeks told the story of a young man named Narcissus, who was remarkably handsome—so handsome that even one of the pagan Greek gods, Echo, fell in love with him. (The English word “echo,” was named after this Greek god, since she was supposedly cursed not to have her own voice, but only to repeat what others say.)

One day, Narcissus arrived at a pond, where he saw for the first time his reflection in the water. He was so taken by the splendor of his reflection that he did not want to move, but stood there gazing and admiring his own reflection in the pond. At some point, he declared to his reflection, “I love you.” Echo saw him and repeated, “I love you.” Narcissus thought his reflection had spoken, and he continued to gaze at himself in the water for days and weeks. At the end, he takes his own life.

The term Narcissism coined in the 19th century was named after that Greek. The narcissist too is incapable of connecting with anything or anybody, but a reflection of himself or herself. The narcissist is so in love with his/her reflection that they have no space for genuine concern or love for anything or anybody else.

Question: How do you drown a narcissist? Answer: Put a mirror at the bottom of the swimming pool.

#### Shimon the Righteous

This Greek story was authored around the year 50 BCE, 120 years before the destruction of the Second Temple. Yet a similar story is found in Jewish sources, taking place a few centuries earlier. The end of the Jewish story is completely different, capturing the key distinctions between Greek mythology and Judaism.

The story is quoted three times in the Talmud (in tractate Nedarim and Nazir in the Babylonian Talmud, and in tractate Nedarim in the Jerusalem Talmud.[1] It is about a young handsome man who came to Shimon Hazaddik, Shimon the righteous one, who served as a High Priest in the beginning of the Second Temple era, around 300 BCE.

Shimon Hatzaddik was one of the last surviving members of the “Men of the Great Assembly,” who rebuilt Judaism during the onset of the second Temple era. He was a legend even in his own day—considered the greatest Jew of his generation. He is the one who

famously stated that “The world stands on three pillars: Torah study, prayer, and kindness.”[2]

#### The Nazirite

In order to appreciate the story, a brief introduction is necessary.

In this week’s portion, Naso (Numbers chapter six), the Torah relates the laws of the Nazirite—a man or woman dedicated to holiness in an extra intense way. The Nazir was an individual who undertook, usually for a limited period of time, to observe special rules of holiness and abstinence: not to drink wine or other intoxicants (including anything made from grapes), not to have his hair cut, and not to defile himself by contact with the dead. His vow was for a fixed term (though it could also be for life), at the end of which he would come to the Temple, cut and burn his hair there, and bring a special offering. Samson was the most famous of all Nazirites.

(In our generation too, there were too famous Jewish Nazirites—the Ragatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Razin (1858-1936), Rabbi of Dvinsk, Poland,[3] and Rabbi David Cohen, known as “Reb David Hanazir” (1887-1972), a student of Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, first chief rabbi of Israel, and the father of the present chief Rabbi of Haifa, Rabbi Shaar Yeshuv Cohen.)

#### The Handsome Shepherd

Now, Shimon Hatzaddik as a rule was critical of Nazirites. He felt that under ordinary circumstances it should not be done. It is too difficult a life style and most Nazirites will regret their vow at some point. Thus he never ate of the sacrifices they offered. But there was one exception described in the Talmud:

נדרים ט, ב: אמר שמעון הצדיק: מימי לא אכלתי אשם נזיר טמא אלא אחד. פעם אחת בא אדם אחד נזיר מן הדרום, וראיתו שהוא יפה עינים וטוב רואי, וקווצותיו סדורות לו תלתלים. אמרתי לו: בני, מה ראית להשחית את שערך זה הנאה? אמר לי: רועה הייתי לאבא בעירי. הלכתי למלאות מים מן המעיין, ונסתכלתי בבבואה שלי, ופחז עלי יצרי ובקש לטורדני מן העולם. אמרתי לו: רשע! למה אתה מתגאה בעולם שאינו שלך, במי שהוא עתיד להיות רימה ותולעה? העבודה שאגלחך לשמים! מיד עמדתי ונשקתיו על ראשו. אמרתי לו: בני, כמוך ירבו גוזרי נזירות בישראל. עליך הכתוב: "באומר: "איש כי יפליא לנדור נדר נזיר להזיר לה

Shimon Hatzaddik related this story:

Once, a young man, a Nazirite, came from the South [of Israel] to the Holy Temple. I saw that he had beautiful eyes, a handsome appearance, and long, braided hair. He came to the High Priest and sage Shimon Hatzaddik and told him that he had just completed a term as a Nazir, and was now going to shave off the hair on his head. Shimon Hatzaddik asked him, “What made you decide to take this vow and destroy your beautiful hair?”

The young man replied, “I worked for my father as a shepherd in my city, and I went to draw water from a wellspring. I began to gaze at my reflection in the water. When I saw how gorgeous and attractive I am, how awesome my hair looked, my evil inclination asserted itself and urged me to engage in immoral and promiscuous behavior, and thus destroy my world. I told my evil inclination: ‘Wicked one! Why are you so arrogant in a world that does not belong to you? Why are you so arrogant about a body that will end up rotting in the grave, eaten by worms?! I swear, I will shave off your hair for the sake of heaven!’”

“Immediately, I stood up and kissed him on his head. And I said, ‘May there be many more Nazirites like you among Israel.’”

#### The Danger

This young man, just like the Greek character Narcissus, was attractive. His body was comely, his physique exquisite, and his hair

enthraling. In the Greek myth, Narcissus falls in love with the figure to the point of self-destruction. In the Jewish story, in stark contrast, the handsome shepherd is keenly aware of the danger of self-worship.

He knows, in his own words, that he is capable of becoming a hedonistic glutton, of fulfilling every promiscuous craving. With such magnificent hair and striking features, he can get his hands on perhaps anyone he desires, and as a result, ultimately—as he put it—lose his entire world. He realizes how easily he can forfeit his integrity and balance if he aggrandizes that which will “end up rotting in the grave.”

He decides to do something drastic: Dedicate his beauty to G-d. He takes his hair and burns it in the Holy Temple, as is the tradition of every Nazirite.

#### Celebrities

This Talmudic story guides every potential celebrity and success story, people who are prone to the danger of living a lie, not allowing themselves to enter into real relationships with people who will speak truth to beauty and power. All men and women of fame, affluence, and power ought to internalize this story. If only they would understand, like that young Shepherd from the south, the perils of being so beautiful, so talented, so famous, so successful, so wealthy, so brilliant, so artistic, so charismatic, so captivating, it can save their future.

And who of us is not a narcissist in some measure? Each of us—at least I can speak of myself—has a tinge, or more than a tinge, of narcissism, and must confront it daily.

In the best-selling book *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, by the cultural historian Christopher Lasch (1932–1994), the author believes that our Western culture has essentially become a “narcissistic culture,” in which we have become pathologically obsessed with ourselves above anything and everything. Where it used to be that people believed in making sacrifices for something outside of themselves—say for marriage, family, children—today more and more people feel that they want to gaze at nothing but their own image for their entire life.

#### The Deeper Cause

This story of the shepherd may contain a yet deeper message about narcissism.

It's not known what causes narcissistic personality disorder. As with other mental disorders, the cause is likely complex. Narcissistic personality disorder may be linked to nurture, nature, genetics, or psychobiology.

Yet some scholars have speculated that it often stems from the person experiencing, consciously or unconsciously, a major void in self-worth and dignity. To compensate for sensing no real place in this world and feeling very unsafe in an essentially overwhelming universe, this person developed the need to focus on himself or herself exclusively. If my “I” does not really exist, creating space for the “Thou” is too scary.

Narcissism may be a brilliant coping mechanism to deal with my profound sense of worthlessness. If I hate myself, I need the entire world to tell me how much they love me, so that for a few minutes a day I can make believe that I have value.

And the remedy to this is when I can experience the Divine energy flowing through me, more potent than any compliment in the world.

What this shepherd can teach us is not only the honesty of knowing what great beauty or success can do to you, but also a method to confront it. If you realize and viscerally feel that this world belongs to G-d; that you were formed by G-d to serve Him in His world, you discover that your identity has true and infinite value. You need not resort to narcissism. G-d loves you unconditionally, your inherent beauty is infinitely greater than anything anyone will ever appreciate about you.

You can then love others the same way. You will not melt and die from opening your heart to others, because your baseline is safe. You know you are safe in G-d's eternal grip.

When your vulnerable and bare core emerges, you will not fall into the abyss; rather, you will find the arms of G-d embracing you.

If I want to live, I want to tear myself away from my fake, external image, so that I can experience my authentic image: the visage of the Divine reflected through me, which nobody can ever take from me.

[1] Talmud Nazir 4b; Nedarim 9b; Talmud Yerushalmi Nedarim 36a.

[2] The Talmud (Yuma 69a) and Josephus relate this fascinating tale about Shimon: When Alexander the Great—the great Greek warrior who conquered almost the entire world (his tutor was the Greek philosopher Aristotle)—marched through the Land of Israel in the year 333 BCE, Shimon Hatzaddik, dressed in his eight priestly robes, went out to greet him. As soon as Alexander saw him, the most powerful person in the world descended from his chariot and bowed respectfully before him. When Alexander's courtiers criticized his act, he replied that he had had a vision in which he had seen an old man, dressed in special garb, who had predicted his victory. When he saw the visage of Shimon Hatzaddik, he realized that this was the man. Alexander demanded that a statue of himself be placed in the Holy Temple; but Shimon explained to him that this was impossible, promising him instead that all the sons born of priests in that year should be named Alexander. Hence, despite the fact that Alexander is a Greek name, at that moment it was converted into a Jewish name to this very day. [3] It is unclear if he was indeed a Nazir, which is why his hair was so long. In *Hearos Ubiurim* issue 920, Rabbi Leibel Groner relates that the Lubavitcher Rebbe told his father, Rabbi Mordechai Groner, that he heard from his own father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, that his father, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber, asked him how the Rogatchover drinks the four cups of wine on Pesach since he is a Nazir. At a meeting in 1988, the Lubavitcher Rebbe asked Rabbi Mordechai Savitzki from Boston if he had heard that the Rogatchover was a Nazir, which is why he did not cut his hair.

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from: **Michal Horowitz** <michalchorowitz@gmail.com> date: May 28, 2026, 8:04 AM subject: **The Power to Elevate** Naso (Chutz La' Aretz) – Beha'aloscha (E"Y) 5786: The Power to Elevate By Michal Horowitz on May 28, 2026

In the beginning of Parshas Naso, the Torah continues the census of the nation. Hashem commands Moshe: *וְשָׂא אֶת רִאשׁוֹן בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן* - Take a census (lit. lift up the heads) of the sons of Gershon (Bamidbar 4:22). On a simple level, the Torah is instructing Moshe to count the numbers. Yet the commentators note that the Torah does not merely say “count.” Instead, it uses the language of elevation - “lift up.” This teaches us something powerful about the Torah's view of every individual. To count a person in the Torah is not merely to record a

number. It is to recognize his value and unique role within Am Yisrael. Every individual matters and carries dignity and purpose. Interestingly, this theme of elevation appears repeatedly throughout the parsha.

The Torah speaks about the responsibilities of the Leviim, each family entrusted with its own sacred task in carrying the Mishkan. It discusses the procedure that takes place with the Sotah, the woman suspected of being unfaithful to her husband. It presents the laws of the Nazir, a person striving for a heightened level of holiness and self-discipline. And the parsha culminates with Birkas Kohanim, through which the Kohanim bless the nation with peace, protection, and Divine grace.

Although these topics appear very different from one another, what emerges is that they are all connected by a single underlying idea: the ability to elevate.

The Leviim elevate physical labor into avodas Hashem. The Nazir seeks to elevate himself spiritually through restraint and discipline. Birkas Kohanim elevates the nation through blessing. Even the process of the Sotah is ultimately intended to restore dignity, harmony, and holiness to the relationship between husband and wife. Again and again, Parshas Naso teaches that the role of Torah is to elevate ourselves and those around us.

This idea finds especially powerful expression in Birkas Kohanim. The Torah commands the kohanim: **כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל - So shall you bless the Children of Israel: May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance toward you and show you favor. May Hashem lift His countenance toward you and grant you peace (Bamidbar 6:23-26).**

While these brachos encompass every dimension of life - physical, spiritual, Divine closeness, and peace - perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these blessings is that Hashem chooses human beings to serve as the vehicle through which His blessing is conveyed.

The concluding pasuk states: **וְאֲנִי אֲבָרְכֶם - And I shall bless them (6:27).** The blessing ultimately comes from Hashem alone. Yet the Kohanim are entrusted with the sacred privilege of becoming the conduit through which that blessing reaches the nation.

This carries a powerful message.

Every Jew has the ability to elevate others. Sometimes elevation occurs through formal acts of leadership or teaching. But often it takes place through far simpler actions: a kind word of encouragement, a moment of patience, sincere concern for another person. A person can lift someone else emotionally, spiritually, or psychologically through the way he speaks, listens, and behaves.

In this sense, the message of “Naso” extends far beyond the census at the beginning of the parsha. We are all capable of “lifting” others. This idea is especially relevant in the world in which we live. So much of society around us encourages comparison, criticism, and competition. People often feel ignored, discouraged, or diminished. In such a world, the gift of elevating another person becomes extraordinarily significant.

Small actions can transform another person’s day, and perhaps even another person’s life. The Torah reminds us that true greatness is not measured only by personal achievement. It is also measured by the extent to which we elevate those around us.

This also explains why the parsha concludes with the offerings of the Nesi'im, the tribal princes. Although each Nasi brought the exact same korban, the Torah repeats every offering individually.

This repetition teaches us an important lesson. In the eyes of Hashem, no individual is overlooked. Each offering mattered because each leader mattered. Once again, the Torah teaches the importance of recognizing and elevating the individual.

As Parshas Beha'aloscha is read this week in E"Y, the image of the Menorah being kindled provides a beautiful parallel to this idea. The flames of the Menorah spread light outward, illuminating the surrounding space. In many ways, this reflects the message of Naso as well. A Jew is called upon not only to grow personally, but to bring light, blessing, and elevation to others.

Indeed, this is one of the central missions of living a Torah life: not only to seek personal spiritual growth, but to become a person who uplifts others; a person - and a nation - whose presence brings encouragement, dignity, kindness, and light.

May we merit to recognize the value within ourselves and within every member of Klal Yisrael. May we use our words, actions, and relationships to elevate those around us. And in this merit, may Hashem bless all of Klal Yisrael with protection, peace, unity, and abundant bracha.

בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום, Michal

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from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: May 27, 2026, 1:52 PM

subject: **Rav Kook on Psalm 50: Torah from Zion**

"From Zion — the perfection of beauty! — God has shone forth." (Psalm 50:2)

What is this beautiful radiance that shines forth from Zion?

Rav Kook explained that it refers to the distinctive quality of Torah in the Land of Israel. Scholars who live in Israel are able to connect with the Torah on a level that is impossible to attain outside of Israel. The unique quality of Torat Eretz Yisrael is illustrated in the following story, as recorded in Shabbat 53a.

Rabbi Zeira Arrives in Israel

Despite his teacher’s opposition, Rabbi Zeira fulfilled his dream and ascended from Babylon to the Land of Israel.

When Rabbi Zeira arrived in Israel, he encountered Rabbi Benjamin bar Yefet, a disciple of the famed scholar Rabbi Yochanan. Rabbi Benjamin was teaching the laws regarding the care of domestic animals on the Sabbath. One is allowed to cover one’s donkey with a saddle-blanket to keep the animal warm, but one may not place a fodder-bag around its neck.

Upon hearing this ruling, Rabbi Zeira exclaimed, “Well said! And that is how a king in Babylon translated it.” The ‘king’ to whom Rabbi Zeira referred was Samuel, a master jurist and leading halakhic authority in third-century Babylon.

Why was Rabbi Zeira so excited when he heard this ruling? And why did he say that Samuel ‘translated’ this law in Babylon?

Animal Care on the Sabbath

We should first reflect on Rabbi Benjamin’s ruling, which seeks to navigate a path between two important values. On the one hand, we are responsible for the welfare of our animals. We have a moral obligation to care for them and relieve them of any pain (tza’ar ba’alei chaim). But if we were to spend our entire Sabbath tending to the needs of chickens and donkeys, what would remain of the special holiness of Shabbat? Excessive involvement in animal husbandry would greatly diminish the holiness of a day meant for spiritual pursuits.

For this reason, the Sages distinguished between a saddle-blanket and a fodder-bag. The blanket is permitted as it protects the donkey from the cold. The fodder-bag, on the other hand, is only a convenience for the donkey, making it easier for the animal to eat. Here the rabbis drew the line, safeguarding the sanctity of the Sabbath day.

Straight from the Source

Rabbi Zeira had heard this ruling before when he lived in Babylon. Nonetheless, hearing it in the Land of Israel was an entirely different experience. Rabbi Zeira felt a surge of energy in this teaching that he had not experienced before.

“Yishar!” he shouted. The word yishar literally means ‘straight.’ The scholar felt an inner connection to this ruling, straight from its vibrant source. What happened?

When the song of holiness pulsates in the heart, we can sense the spiritual and ethical source for each specific law. Even when dealing with what would appear to be dry, prosaic rules, the soul is overwhelmed by the beauty of its sublime poetry.

Our sensitivity to this inner song is a function of our physical and spiritual state. When the soul is exiled to foreign lands, the inner content of the Torah is relegated to a shadow of its true self. Torah laws become detached from their living source. Learning Torah outside the Land of Israel is like reading a poem that was translated into a foreign language. Something of the vitality and lyric beauty of the original is lost.

When Rabbi Zeira achieved his life’s goal and ascended to the Land of Israel, he underwent a profound transformation. His entire world was elevated. He could now perceive with greater clarity the inner essence of every law.

Yishar! he cried out. Now he could feel the inner vitality, the holy life-source residing within this law. Wonder filled his heart, as he perceived how the Torah’s lofty ideals penetrated even the most mundane aspects of everyday life.

Torah Outside the Land

Samuel, the great Babylonian scholar, had given a similar ruling. But there, outside of Israel, it was only a translation. It lacked the vitality of the original. “And that is how a king in Babylon translated it.”

With his great legal acumen, Samuel could distinguish between covering a donkey with a blanket and hanging a fodder-bag over its neck. But to truly feel this fine distinction — when involvement in mundane life warranted and when it is detrimental — can only be experienced at the Torah’s source, in the Land of Israel. In Babylon, this could only be grasped intellectually.

When Rabbi Zeira heard Rabbi Benjamin teaching this law, he was struck by the contrast between Torah law studied in exile and the brilliant light of Torah heard in its natural setting.

Thus wrote King David, “From Zion, the perfection of beauty, God [Elokim] has shone forth.” The verse specifically uses the Divine name Elokim. For in the Land of Israel, even the Divine attribute of middat hadin — the legal realm of Halakhah — shines with a special light, as its original beauty is revealed.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 15-16)

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Excerpted from

**Shalom Rav by Rabbi Shalom Rosner**

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**The Triple Blessing**

May Hashem bless and protect you. May Hashem cause His

countenance to shine to you and favor you. May Hashem raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace. (Bemidbar 6:24-26) When Birkat Kohanim, which appears in our parasha, is recited by the hazzan (every day in hutz laaretz, and when there is no kohen present in Eretz Yisrael) during the repetition of the Amida, he prefaces the verse with an introductory prayer that begins, "Bless us with the threefold berakha."

Why is Birkat Kohanim called a "threefold berakha"? There are three verses, but as Rabbi Mordechai Willig points out, there are actually six berakhot, two in each verse. Perhaps it should be called the "sixfold berakha"! Rabbi Willig suggests that each verse actually contains one twofold berakha, totaling three berakhot (each of which has two components). Am Mordechai Berakot, Introduction. What does this mean?

The first berakha, "May Hashem bless and protect you," is about wealth, meaning that Hashem should bless us with material wealth and preserve and protect that wealth. Every blessing must be protected. HaKadosh Barukh Hu might bestow something on us, but if we misuse it, then it can turn into something terrible, not a berakha at all. The berakha is that Hashem should provide for us but also protect us to make sure we use our wealth properly, in our service to Hashem, not in pursuit of our desires. The Sifrei (Ekev 6) explains that a person only rebels against Hashem when he is satiated, when he feels that he doesn't need God because he has what he needs. Thus, the berakha of material wealth must be accompanied by protection against its corrupting influence.

"May Hashem cause His countenance to shine to you and favor you." What is the "shining" of Hashem's "countenance"? This refers to Torah, as we say at the end of the Amida: "For with the light of Your countenance, You, Hashem our God, granted us the Torah." The berakha is that Hashem should light up our life with Torah. However, just like wealth is a double-edged sword, Torah can also be a double-edged sword. The more Torah we know, the more responsibility we have to act in a way that is fitting for it. If we're viewed as Torah scholars and don't act in an appropriate manner, then we desecrate Hashem's name. We have to be careful that our Torah knowledge doesn't cause us to be arrogant. Therefore, it must be balanced by a berakha that we find favor with others.

The first berakha relates to a material pursuit, and the second to a spiritual pursuit. The third berakha is a synthesis of the first two. We ask that we will be able to properly balance between the material and the spiritual, a difficult balance to achieve. We therefore ask for peace and tranquility.

Birkat Kohanim is thus indeed a threefold berakha, but each berakha requires a specific counterbalance, a protection against the excesses of the first berakha, ensuring that it isn't misused but properly channeled in order to enhance our service of Hashem.

### **A Receptacle for Berakha**

They shall bestow My name upon the children of Israel, so that I will bless them. (Bemidbar 6:27)

After recording Birkat Kohanim, the Torah states: "They shall bestow My name upon the children of Israel, so that I will bless them." This pasuk is somewhat cryptic. What does it mean that the kohanim "bestow God's name" on the children of Israel? And who is blessing us, the kohanim or Hashem?

The Akedat Yitzhak, quoted in Lekah Tov (R' Yaakov Yisrael Bifus),

suggests, as do many baalei mussar, that in order to receive berakha, one must first prepare himself to be a worthy recipient of it. The Akedat Yitzhak explains with a parable: Imagine a river with rushing water and rapids. One section, you notice, is much deeper than the rest. There is more water there because the riverbed is deeper. The lower the bed, the more water can gather there. The wider the depression, the more water can gather there. God's blessings, His shefa, works similarly. He's constantly bestowing bounty and blessing on the world, and the more we prepare ourselves and make ourselves worthy of them, the more we're able to receive them. As the pasuk in Tehillim (81:11) states: "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

This, explains the Akedat Yitzhak, is the meaning of the kohanim "bestowing the name of Hashem" upon Bnei Yisrael. The kohanim have to be the leaders and teachers of Klal Yisrael and must make sure that the people are worthy of Hashem's blessings. It's the job of educators and parents to teach and inspire the people so that they conduct their lives in a way that makes them worthy of Hashem's blessings.

The Peninei HaTorah (Rabbi David Hadad) expresses a similar idea. He quotes the Dubno Maggid as asking, "Why, when the kohanim bless the people of Israel, do they face the people? Wouldn't it make more sense for them to face the Ark and pray toward Hashem, asking Him to bless the people?" The Dubno Maggid answers that the kohanim facing the people expresses to them that it's up to them, to us, to make ourselves worthy of receiving Hashem's berakha. Hashem wants to give us His blessing, it's up to us to become worthy receptacles of it.

<https://jewishlink.news/minyan-and-kiddush-levana/>

## **Minyan and Kiddush Levana**

**By Rabbi Haim Jachter**

May 28, 2026

B'rov Am Hadrat Melech

Many mistakenly think that Kiddush Levana requires a minyan, especially since most say Kaddish at this occasion (German Jews do not). However, Kiddush Levana does not appear on the mishna's (Megillah 4:3) list of activities that require a minyan. Moreover, the desirability of a minyan at Kiddush Levana first appears in the Magen Avraham (426:13). The Magen Avraham's idea is well-accepted, as the Biur Halacha (426:2 s.v. Ela) and Kaf HaChaim (426:13) codify it. However, the Biur Halacha clarifies (citing the Pri Chadash) that, strictly speaking, one may recite Kiddush Levana by himself.

Moreover, it is not a minyan that is required, but a large group, as the Magen Avraham and Biur Halacha mentions, "b'rov am hadrat melech—the larger the group, the greater the glory extended to the king." Thus, the larger the group, the more we glorify Hashem. In addition, the Biur Halacha cites the Chayei Adam, which states that even three people reciting Kiddush Levana together also constitutes "b'rov am hadrat melech." Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 1:144) adds that there is even significance to two people saying Kiddush Levana together.

The Source: Kabbalat Pnei HaShechina

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 42a) speaks of Kiddush Levana in grand terms, stating that it involves kabbalat pnei haShechina. The Gemara even says that it would be sufficient for us if we were only to conduct

our monthly Kiddush Levana. As such, Kiddush Levana is not an ordinary bracha.

The Gemara continues by saying that, since we greet Hashem when saying Kiddush Levana, we must say it while standing. The Gemara even records that Mereimar and Mar Zutra (following Yad Rama's interpretation) exerted great effort, in their elder years, to stand as best they could to recite Kiddush Levana, thereby expressing the great stature of Kiddush Levana.

Therefore, we accord Kiddush Levana extraordinary honor and respect. We recite it outdoors as we would to greet a king, say it on Motzei Shabbat while still wearing our Shabbat finery, dance afterwards, and include various pesukim and teachings of Chazal that emphasize the importance of Kiddush Levana. Reciting Kiddush Levana with a large group is yet another way to exalt this great ceremony and elevate its monthly recital into a very special event. How Long Should We Wait?

The Biur Halacha cites the Eishel Avraham, stating that, just as the Rama (Orach Chaim 426:2) says we wait for a Motzei Shabbat to recite Kiddush Levana only until 10 days past the molad, the same applies to waiting for a large group. Both a large group and the Motzei Shabbat recital glorify Kiddush Levana, but neither is essential to its recitation. Thus, we tolerate the risk of missing the opportunity to recite this precious bracha only until 10 days from the molad.

Separate Ashkenazic and Sephardic Kiddush Levana Groups? Surprisingly, Rav Ovadia Yosef (in a letter printed in Kovetz Mishnat Yosef 18:108:2) rules that, due to their slightly different nuschaot for Kiddush Levana, Sephardim and Ashkenazim should split into two groups to recite Kiddush Levana. Rav Mordechai Willig disagrees. Rav Willig's ruling seems much more compelling, as the differences are not so stark as to require sacrificing "b'rov hadrat melech" to create two separate groups.

Conclusion: Priority to Say Kiddush Levana With a Group Although not required, there is a strong preference to recite Kiddush Levana in a large group. It is so important that the Shaa'ar HaTziyun (426:20) writes that if one has a choice between saying Kiddush Levana with a large group during the week and alone on Motzei Shabbat, saying it in a large group has priority.

Rabbi Jachter serves as the rav of Congregation Shaarei Orah, rebbe at Torah Academy of Bergen County and a get administrator with the Beth Din of Elizabeth. Rabbi Jachter's 22 books, including the most recently published "Chiddush Levanah: New Insights and Clarifications of Kiddush Levanah," may be purchased at Amazon and Judaica House.