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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

MORE OF A GOOD THING

Parshas Nasso is the longest Parsha of the year. It contains 176 verses. Interestingly, that's also the number of verses in the longest Parsha in *Nach* (the Prophets and Writings). It is also the number of pages in the longest Tractate in the Babylonian Talmud - *Bava Basra* - 176 pages.

Parshas Nasso also is the subject of a vast number of Midrashim, and is dealt with at great length in the *Zohar*. More than any other of the weekly portions.

What is the reason for this great expansiveness?

Parshas Nasso almost always falls out the Shabbos after *Shavuos*, the time of the giving of the Torah. And so the week after we receive the Torah, our Sages embodied the feelings of great enthusiasm and love that its giving engenders by enlarging and broadening the Parsha which follows its giving.

ARMORED BLESSINGS

"Hashem should bless you and keep you." (6:24)

Once there was a king who had a beloved friend who lived in Syria. The king wished to honor his friend and so he summoned him to his palace in Rome. The king feted his friend in royal style and gave him a hundred pieces of pure gold to take back home with him.

On the way home, the king's friend was beset by bandits who

stole not only the hundred pieces of gold, but also everything else he possessed.

A king of flesh and blood can give extravagant presents, but he has no means of guaranteeing that his blessings will remain with the recipient.

When Hashem blesses us, however, He has the power not only to bless us, but to guard the blessing so that it will stay with us. It's burglar-

"Hashem blesses us, and guards the blessing so that it will stay with us. It's burglar-proof."

proof. That is the simple meaning of this verse: "May Hashem bless you and guard that blessing from all loss." There's no 'Brink's' van in the world that can guarantee you that!

WORLDS UNITE

"A man or a woman who will take a nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem..." (6:2)

Three worlds. Thought, Action and Speech.

Three worlds that can be blemished.

This week's Parsha deals with the *Nazir*. The *Nazir*, who seeks to purify himself and come close to Hashem, separates himself from

three things: Cutting the hair, drinking wine, and becoming *tameh* (ritually impure through contact with the dead).

These three separations correct blemishes in the three worlds of Thought, Action and Speech.

Thought: Hair grows from the head, the seat of thought. Thus, cutting the hair represents correcting imperfections in the sphere of thought.

Action: *Tumah* corresponds to the sphere of action. The principal source of *Tumah* results from contact with a dead body, for before its passing, the body was the epitome of life and action.

Speech: Wine represents the function of speech. Hence the saying: "Enter the wine - exit the secret." Secrets are communicated by words. By speech. Correction in the sphere of speech is effected by abstinence from wine.

Corresponding to these three worlds are the three *korbanos* (offerings): *Olah*, *Chatas* and *Shlamim*. The *Olah* corrects faults in the thought; *Chatas*, in action and *Shlamim*, in speech.

Speech combines both thought and action, soul and body. Speech is a synthesis of the non-physical and the physical. For without thought there can be no speech, and without the movement and shaping of the lips, there can be no issue of words.

Let's take a look at *Shlamim*:

The word *Shlamim* is from the same root as *shalom*, which means *wholeness*. Wholeness is the unification of all parts into one.

Just as speech is a unification of thought and action, so too *Shlamim*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the sons of *Gershon, Kehas, and Merari, the Bnei Levi.*

A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those who are ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property after having sworn to the contrary in court, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object, and bring a guilt offering to

atone for his transgression. In the event that the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *Kohen.* In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his

wife had been unfaithful brings his wife, a *Sotah,* to a *Kohen.* The *Kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with a certain dust and a special ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is indeed innocent, the potion does not harm her — in fact it brings a blessing of children. However, if she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *Nazir* is someone who vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He is obliged to abstain from all grape products, let his hair grow, and avoid all contact with corpses. At the end of this period, he shaves his head and brings special offerings in the Temple before returning to normal life. If he fails to successfully complete his count, he needs to begin the count anew after shaving his head and bringing an offering in the Temple. The *Kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nissan* in the second year after the Exodus. The Princes of each Tribe make a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan,* as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

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*in memory of a beloved one
or in honor of a simcha*

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FATHERLY ADVICE

*Tidbits From the 'Ethics of the Fathers'
Traditionally Studied on Summer Sabbaths*

There are four categories of human character. One who is easily angered but easily appeased - his gain is surpassed by his loss. One who is brought to anger with difficulty, but is also appeased with difficulty - his loss is surpassed by his gain. If it is difficult to bring him to anger and easy to appease him, he is a righteous man. If it is easy to bring him to anger and difficult to appease him, he is a wicked man. (Avos 5:11)

Even the righteous man is capable of anger, but only an extreme situation will provoke him to such a reaction. The classic example is Moshe Rabbeinu whom the Torah describes (*Bamidbar 31:14*) as becoming angry with the officers of the Israelite army. They had failed

to carry out the Divine command to annihilate the Midianite women whose licentious behavior had brought spiritual and physical tragedy upon the nation. To be completely devoid of anger is not human, and is therefore not even listed as a category of human character.

לע"נ
ר משה צבי בן ר נתן הלוי ז"ל
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is mentioned in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *temeim* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnos kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnos kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the name of Hashem is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people 'with a full heart.' What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of 'a full heart'?
18. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem bless you and guard you?"
19. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem lift up His countenance upon you?"
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

BONUS QUESTION?

"And he instructs the woman to drink the bitter, cursing water..." (5:24). The water is 'cursing water' because it brings gruesome death upon the woman who drinks it if she is guilty of infidelity. But why is it called 'bitter'? What gives it a bitter flavor?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Nasso, the longest of all the Torah portions, has 176 verses. The longest chapter in *Tehillim* (Psalms) has 176 verses. The longest Tractate in the Talmud, Bava Basra, ends on page 176!

HAFTORAH: SHOFTIM 13:2-25

Shimshon (Samson) was the most famous nazir in Tanach, and thus this week's Parsha which describes the laws of the nazir is complemented by the story of the birth of Shimson.

IDENTITY PAPERS

"The angel of Hashem said to him, 'Why is it that you ask for my name? It is hidden.'" (13:18)

The more you seek the essence of the angel of holiness, to ask what his name is, the more elusive and hidden he becomes.

However, when Yaakov asked the angel of Esav

— the epitome of the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination) — what was his name, he also answered "Why is it that you ask my name?"

The difference between these two instances is that the angel of holiness has a name but it is hidden, whereas the *yetzer hara* has no name, for the *yetzer hara* has substance only when we don't seek to know who and what he really is.

However, if a person will examine the 'identity papers' of the *yetzer hara* even for a second, he will realize that it has no real substance whatsoever, and thus no name.

• *One of the Gedolei HaMussar in Mayana shel Torah*

WEEKLY DAF

KRISOS 25 - ME'ILAH 4

YOM KIPPUR AND THE UNKNOWN SINS

If a Jew had an obligation to offer a *korban chatas* (sin offering) or a *korban asham* (guilt offering) for a sin which he definitely committed he must make that offering even if Yom Kippur intervened between the time of the sin and the sacrifice. But if there was a doubt as to whether the sin was committed and there is an obligation to offer an *asham taluy* we consider that sin atoned for by the passing of Yom Kippur and there is no longer any need to offer that sacrifice.

The source for this distinction is the Torah passage (*Vayikra* 16:30) declaring that Yom Kippur provides purification “from all your sins before Hashem.” A sin which is known only to Hashem is atoned for, but one which is known to the sinner as well requires the atonement of sacrifice even after Yom Kippur.

A challenge to this interpretation is posed by the Gemara from the following case. A woman gives birth to something of which there is doubt as to whether it obligates her to offer the sacrifice required of every mother after a normal birth. She is required to offer a sacrifice because of the possibility that the birth obligated her, and must do so even if Yom Kippur passed in the meantime. Since her obligation too is something “known only to Hashem” why does she not gain

exemption from it with Yom Kippur?

The Gemara’s response is that the sacrifice following birth is for the purpose of elevating the mother from her state of ritual impurity rather than atoning for sin, and is therefore not affected by the atonement of Yom Kippur. This explanation, however, does not seem to fit in with the position of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who stated that every woman is guilty of some sin in childbirth because when she experiences the pangs of labor she vows never to have relations again with her husband. The resolution of this problem is that whatever sin she may be guilty of for such a rash vow is atoned for by the pain suffered in the actual birth, and the purpose of the sacrifice is to purify her and make her eligible to eat sacred sacrificial flesh. The atonement of Yom Kippur therefore does not affect this sacrifice even according to Rabbi Shimon.

• *Krisos 26a*

THE SUBTLE LESSON

Me'ilah — the name of the *Mesechta* we begin this week — means transgressing by using for private purposes an animal, funds or any other property which has been consecrated for the use of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

One who transgresses by thus misappropriating even the value of a *prutah* must atone for his sin in the following way:

If he was aware that the property

was sacred and intentionally misappropriated it, he is punished with flogging and he must repay the amount he took. If he was unaware that this was sacred property and mistakenly thought he was using his own, then he achieves atonement by repaying the amount taken and adding a *chomesh* (literally a fifth but since this means a fifth of the amount taken with the fifth added on we would refer to it in our language as a fourth) and offering a ram as a *korban asham me'ilah* sacrifice.

Rambam, at the conclusion of his codification of the laws pertaining to this subject, draws this powerful lesson for us in how to relate to Torah statutes that defy our comprehension:

“It is proper for a person to ponder the laws of the Torah in order to comprehend them as much as he can. But he should not view disrespectfully those laws whose reasons he fails to grasp. His thoughts about them must not be like the thoughts one has of secular matters. Let us take a look at how severely the Torah deals with the transgressor of *me'ilah*. If sticks and stones, dust and ashes become sacred simply because the Name of Hashem has been declared upon them, and anyone who utilizes them for a secular purpose has transgressed and requires atonement even if he did so involuntarily; how much more so is this true in regard to the commands which Hashem legislated that one should not disrespectfully reject them just because he fails to understand the reason for them.”

• *Me'ilah 2*

continued from page one

PARSHA INSIGHTS

unified the three elements of the offering:

1. The *mizbe'ach* (the altar)
2. The *Kohen* who offers the sacrifice, and
3. The person who brings the offering.

How did *Shlamim* unify these three elements?

Part of the *Shlamim* offering was placed on the *mizbe'ach*. Part was eaten by the *kohen*, and part was eaten by the supplicant. Thus, the *Shlamim* unified all the parts of the service of the *Beis Hamikdash*, just as

speech unifies thought and action.

It is interesting to note that of the three *avos* (Patriarchs), only Yaakov brought *Shlamim*. Why?

Yaakov is the synthesis of Avraham and Yitzchak. Just as *Shlamim* correspond to speech which is a synthesis of thought and action, so too Yaakov was a synthesis of his two predecessors. And interestingly enough, the Midrash tells us that Yaakov never uttered a wasted word. He epitomizes the attribute of speech, and necessarily, he brought *shalom* between Israel and their

Father in Heaven.

Similarly, we see that *Shlamim* were not brought until after the Torah was given, for it was only through the Ten Commandments (or literally the ten utterances of speech) that we were given the ability to bring *Shlamim*.

Sources:

- **More Of A Good Thing** - Chidushei HaRim in Iturei Torah
- **Armored Blessings** - Midrash Tanchuma Nasso 10, Rabbeinu Bachya
- **World's Unite** - Shem MiShmuel

FINGERNAILS

Alan Zukerman and Scott Shapiro
<kgir@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Could you provide some background on the very perplexing warning that a pregnant woman who walks on a fingernail clipping is in danger of miscarriage?

Wilfred Schuster
<wschust@ibm.net>
from Toronto wrote:

What is the origin of the habit of burning one's nail clippings or disposing of them with care? Is there a source for this in the Tanach or in the Talmud?

The ruling that one should carefully dispose of fingernail clippings is found in the Talmud and is cited in the Shulchan Aruch. The reason the Talmud gives for this 'very perplexing ruling' is that a pregnant woman who steps on a fingernail clipping is in danger of a miscarriage. What is the idea behind this?

According to *Kabbalah*, Adam was created with a hard shiny membrane covering his whole body. When he ate from the forbidden tree Adam lost this covering, but it remained on the tips of his fingers and toes.

This concept is a metaphor for a very deep idea: Every person is intrinsically immortal due to his spiritual soul. However, by attaching himself to the physical world through improper actions (Adam's sin) a person becomes vulnerable to death

and material destruction (loss of protective covering).

The concept of a fingernail harming a pregnant woman is based on the following idea: The nail, which is dead matter, represents death and the mortality of the human being. The pregnant woman represents creation, life and immortality. In mystical thinking, objects contain 'sparks' of the ideas which they symbolize. Opposite 'sparks' brought together can cause harm on the spiritual and physical level. Hence, the fingernail, death, is kept away from the pregnant woman, life.

Sources:

- Moed Kattan 18a, Nidah 17a
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 260.
- Ibid., Be'er Heteiv

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

Explain how the following situation could occur: You take a certain item and before deriving benefit from it you say the required blessing. One minute later you take the exact same item and derive the exact same type of benefit from it. However, this time the blessing beforehand is a different blessing. (The item contains no grain. The item undergoes no change whatsoever.)

Answer:

Smelling fragrant spices after Shabbat.

There are different categories of fragrant spices. Each category

requires a different blessing. For example, for spices that grow on trees the blessing is "Blessed are You Hashem ...Who creates fragrant trees." For spices derived from herbs which do not grow on trees, the blessing is "Blessed are You Hashem ...Who creates fragrant herbs."

However, at the 'havdalah' ceremony after Shabbat a different blessing is said. At 'havdalah' the blessing is always "Blessed are you Hashem ...Who creates various types of fragrances." In essence, this blessing is for a mixture of spices, or for spices of unknown nature. But at *havdalah*, this is the standard blessing regardless of the type of spice. This avoids confusion, since often it's difficult to identify a given spice, its origins and proper blessing. (This is according to the Ashkenazic custom. Sephardic Jews say the precise blessing.)

So, let's say you use a myrtle branch for the *havdalah* ceremony (intending to smell it only once). You say: "Blessed are You ...Who creates various spices." Then, immediately after *havdalah* you decide to smell the exact same myrtle branch. This time, the blessing is "Blessed are You ...Who creates fragrant trees."

Ideally, you should use for *havdalah* a spice whose proper blessing is "various spices" The Mishna Berurah suggests cloves.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 217
- Ibid., Mishna Berurah 5, Sha'ar Hatzion 6
- Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim 297:4
- Mishna Berurah 297:1

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The Camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the Camp of *Levi* which was surrounded by the Camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the Camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the Camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of Hashem is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shlamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - '*Amor*.'
18. 6:24 - "May Hashem bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of *Yissachar* was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

BONUS ANSWER!

The Torah's curses are written with ink on parchment, and the parchment is then erased into the water. The dissolved ink gives the water a bitter flavor.

• *Abarbanel*, see also *Ramban 5:18* quoting the *Sifri*

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN		SFORNO		
5:2, 5:6	Organization of this Parsha	7:13	Gifts of the <i>Nesi'im</i>	365 Marital Peace
5:20	Waters of the <i>Sotah</i>		SEFER HACHINUCH	366 <i>Sotah</i> Offering
6:11	Sin of the <i>Nazir</i>	362	<i>Tumah</i> and <i>Kedusha</i>	374 Appropriate Asceticism
6:24	Blessings of the <i>Kohanim</i>	364	Confession	378 The Blessing of the <i>Kohanim</i>

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