

Parshah Naso in a Nutshell

(Numbers 4:21–7:89)

Completing the headcount of the Children of Israel taken in the Sinai Desert, a total of 8,580 Levite men between the ages of 30 and 50 are counted in a tally of those who will be doing the actual work of transporting the Tabernacle.

G-d communicates to Moses the law of the sotah, the wayward wife suspected of unfaithfulness to her husband. Also given is the law of the nazir, who forswears wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and is forbidden to become contaminated through contact with a dead body. Aaron and his descendants, the kohanim, are instructed on how to bless the people of Israel.

The leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel each bring their offerings for the inauguration of the altar. Although their gifts are identical, each is brought on a different day and is individually described by the Torah. ❖

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The Talmud teaches that the best vaccine against all illness is a healthy confidence in the Director of the Universe.

By the grace of Hashem, following all CDC Guidelines, our Shul is now able to offer outdoor Minyanim at this time. Contact one of the rabbis for details.

Charity

In late 1827 an epidemic broke out in the city of Orsha (near the city of Lubavitch), in which three or four people were dying daily, the in-habitants turned to his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, later known as the Tzemach Tzedek, for advice.

In addition to quoting a story in the Zohar about reading the portion of the ketoret during an epidemic, the Tzemach Tzedek suggested that, in light of the verse in Proverbs “And charity will save from death,” they should add in charity. However, he stressed that, as is explained in Tanya, it is preferable to give charity many times throughout the day (especially before prayer) in smaller denominations than just giving one large sum, even if it equals the same amount. Ideally, the total sum of each day should be a multiple of 18.

Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, June 6

Daylight Savings Time

Earliest Tallis 4:14 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:07 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola).. 1:34 PM
Plag Hamincha 6:56 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 9:00 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

**Limited Shul Services
“Shabbos Schedule”**

Erev Shabbos – June 5 / Sivan 13

Candle Lighting 8:07 pm

Shabbos Day – June 6 / Sivan 14

Shabbos Ends..... 9:16 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:07 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema before that time).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Shul Offering Limited Minyanim

Please check with one of the Rabbis.

Incense Portion

Exodus 30:22–38

Although we unfortunately no longer have the Temple, the Kabbalists say that by reading the portion in the Torah that discusses the incense, it is as if one actually brought it. Thus, although many have the custom to recite this portion daily, one should take extra care to learn and recite it at the time of an epidemic.

Chassidic Masters 1

“The Hiding Wife”

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

The prophets speak of the bond between G-d and Israel as a marriage, and of Israel’s sins as a wife’s betrayal of her husband. Following this model, the sages of the Talmud see the sotah—the “wayward wife” discussed in our Parshah—as the prototype of all transgression against the divine will. The chassidic masters further investigate this prototype, finding in the particulars of the laws of sotah insight into the deeper significance of transgression.

The sotah is not a woman who is known to have actually committed adultery, but rather one whose behavior makes her suspect of having done so. Her faithfulness to her husband must therefore be established before the marriage relationship can be resumed.

A woman becomes a sotah through a two-stage process: “jealousy” (kinui) and “hiding” (setirah). The first stage occurs when a husband suspects his wife of an improper relationship with another man, and warns her not to be alone with that individual. If the woman disregards this warning and proceeds to seclude herself with the other man, she becomes a sotah, forbidden to live with her husband unless she agrees to be tested with the “bitter waters.” The woman is warned that if she has indeed committed

adultery, the “bitter waters” will kill her; if, however, she has not actually been unfaithful, the drinking of these waters exonerates her completely. In fact, the Torah promises that, having subjected herself to this ordeal, her marriage will now be even more rewarding and fruitful than before her “going astray.”

As applied to the marriage between G-d and His people:

Israel can never truly betray her G-d; at worst she can be only like a sotah, a wife whose behavior gives the appearance of unfaithfulness and causes a temporary rift between herself and her husband. The process began at Mount Sinai, when G-d, like a “jealous” husband, warned: “Do not have any other gods before Me.” But no matter how far the Jewish soul strays, she never truly gives herself to these “other gods”; she is only “hiding” from G-d, indulging the illusion that there exists a dimension of reality that is outside of G-d’s all-pervading presence and providence.

Even this she can do only because G-d has “set her up” to it by His “jealousy.” In the case of the sotah, simply secluding herself with another man does not make her a “wayward wife”—unless such seclusion has been preceded by a warning from her husband. In other words, it is the husband’s “jealousy” which makes her act a betrayal, not the act in and of itself. By the same token, a soul’s “hiding herself” from G-d is possible only because G-d has allowed for this

possibility by proclaiming “Do not have any other gods before Me,” thereby giving credence to the illusion that there can be anything other. Were it not for this divine contrivance, sin—that is, a denial of the divine reality—would not be possible.

To continue the analogy: When the Jewish people act as a sotah, they are tested with the bitter waters of galut (“Because of our sins we were exiled from our land”). Indeed, two thousand years of exile have proven that, despite all appearances, the Jewish soul is inseparable from her G-d. The Jew may be persecuted for centuries, may assimilate for generations, but ultimately there comes a moment of truth, a moment which lays bare the question of who and what we are, stripped of all distortion and self-delusion, and our innate faithfulness to G-d comes to light.

And like the bitter waters of the sotah, galut is more than just a test. It is a “descent for the sake of ascent,” a crisis in the marriage which ultimately deepens and enhances it by unearthing deep wells of loyalty and commitment which remain untapped in an unchallenged relationship. The trials of galut call forth the quintessential powers of the Jewish soul, intensifying the bond between G-d and His people. ❖

*I’ve never wanted to serve a G-d
whose ways would be understand-
able to mere mortals.*

-- Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

Chassidic Masters 2

“Earthen Vessel”

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com

G-d spoke to Moses, saying: A man whose wife shall stray and commit a betrayal against him . . . that man shall bring his wife to the kohen. . . . The kohen shall take holy water in an earthen vessel . . .

-- Numbers 5:11–23

Life, as described by the Kabbalists, is a marriage of body and soul. The soul—the active, vital force in the relationship—is its “male” component. The body—the vessel that receives the soul, and channels and focuses its energies—is the “female” element in the relationship.

Common wisdom has it that spirit is loftier than matter, and the soul superior to the body. Indeed, the soul of man maintains a perpetual awareness of its Creator and Source, while the body, susceptible to the enticements of the material, is often the culprit in man’s tendency to forget, stray and betray.

But this is a “male” vision of life. There also exists another perspective on reality—a perspective in which passivity is superior to activity, being is greater than doing, and earthiness is truer than abstraction. A perspective in which the body is not no more than at best a servant of the soul (and at worst its antagonist), but is itself a matrix of the divine.

Our sages tell us that there will come a time when the supremacy of the female will come to light. A time when the physical will equal and

surpass the spiritual as a vehicle of connection to G-d. A time when “the soul shall draw its nourishment from the body.”

Therein lies the deeper significance of the laws of the sotah (the “wayward wife”) legislated in the fifth chapter of Numbers.

The law of the sotah dictates that a man who suspects his wife of unfaithfulness (and has evidence that substantiates his suspicions) should bring her to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. There a kohen (priest) fills an earthen vessel with water from the Temple laver, and mixes in earth from the Temple ground. He then inscribes the oath of faithfulness (Numbers 5:19–22) upon a parchment scroll, which he also places in the “bitter waters” until the words dissolve in the water. The “wayward wife” then drinks of the water.

If the woman is indeed guilty of adultery, the “bitter waters” would spell her end. If her husband’s suspicions were unjustified, the waters would not only exonerate her but would actually enhance her relationship with her husband and the productivity of their marriage.

It is significant that the “wayward wife” was vindicated by means of holy water placed in an earthen vessel. This is in contrast to a law regarding the kindling of the Chanukah lights which instructs that one should avoid kindling them in a clay lamp or other earthen vessel, as the placement of oil in such utensils yields unaesthetic results. Indeed, the lights in the Holy Temple, after which the Chanukah lights are modeled, were lit with the finest olive oil in a candelabrum of pure

gold. While the Chanukah lights are not held to such a high standard of purity and refinement, they ideally should use a clean-burning fuel (oil or wax), and require a utensil of metal or other “clean” material.

The Chanukah lights proclaim the supremacy of spirit over matter. This is expressed in oil, whose nature is not to mix with other liquids but to rise above them, as spirit holds itself aloof from the physical and the earthly. It is only natural that something of such a “spiritual” and “male” character would shun the earthen vessel.

But there is also a fluid of another sort. “The Torah has been compared to water,” writes Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi in his Tanya, “because just as water tends to descend from a higher place to a lower place, so has the Torah descended from its place of glory, which is the will and wisdom of G-d . . . until it has clothed itself in physical things and in matters of this world.”

When a soul contemplates his body and finds her a “wayward wife” contentious to his spiritual goals, his wont may be to lay the blame on her femininity, on her physicality and earthiness. But if he truly desires to achieve harmony between them, he must learn to incorporate her feminine vision into their marriage. He must learn that life is more than spiritual oil flickering in vessels of purest gold. He must learn that it is also water—water that gravitates earthward to fill the most material containers with its divine essence. ❖

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From Our Sages

They shall set My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them (Numbers 6:27)

I would have thought that if the kohanim desire to bless Israel, then Israel is blessed, but if they do not, they are not; therefore the verse tells me: "I will bless them." In either case, says G-d, I will bless them from heaven.

The kohanim bless Israel, but who blesses the kohanim? Therefore the verse tells me: "I will bless them."

-- (Sifri Zuta)

The one who offered his offering on the first day was Nachshon the son of Aminadav, of the tribe of Judah. And his offering was: One silver dish, weighing 130 shekels. One silver bowl of 70 shekels . . . On the second day offered Nethanel the son of Zuar, of the tribe of Issachar. His offering was: One silver dish, weighing 130 shekels. One silver bowl of 70 shekels . . . (7:12–23)

The Torah is very mincing with words: many a complex chapter of Torah law is derived from a choice of context, a turn of language, even an extra letter. Yet in our Parshah, the Torah seemingly "squanders" dozens of verses by itemizing the gifts brought by the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel on the occasion of the inauguration of the Sanctuary. Each tribe brought its offering on a different day, but the gifts they each brought were identical in every respect, down to the weight of the silver plates and the age of the five lambs. Nevertheless, the Torah recounts each tribe's gift separately, repeating the 35-item list twelve times in succession.

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 13 & 14) explains that while the twelve tribes made identical offerings, each experienced the event in a different manner. Each of the 35 items in the offering symbolized something—a personality or event in Jewish history, or a concept in Jewish faith or practice—but to each tribe they symbolized different things, relating to that tribe's role. For the twelve tribes represent the various vocations amongst the people of Israel: Judah produced Israel's kings, leaders and legislators; Issachar its scholars; Zebulun its seafarers and merchants; and so on. All conform to the same divinely ordained guidelines, all order their lives by the same Torah; yet each flavors the very same deeds with his individual nature and approach.

Often we tend to see a tension between conformity and creativity, between tradition and innovation. On the one hand, we recognize the bedrock of absolutes upon which a meaningful existence must rest, the time-tested truths which transcend cultures and generations; on the other, we are faced with the powerful drive to create, to personalize, to grow and soar with our individualized talents and tools.

Our daily prayers, for example, follow the basic text instituted by the prophets and sages of the Great Assembly more than 2,300 years ago; as such, their content and wording optimally express the manner in which man relates to G-d. Yet how is the individual in man to be satisfied with a common formula for every person?

Is monotony the price we must pay for perfection? Does creativity compromise truth? Not so, say the 72 "repetitious" verses in our Parshah. An entire nation, including individuals of every conceivable character and calling, can do the very same deed, down to every last detail, and still imbue them with their uniquely personal input. Even as they relate to the ultimate common denominator of their bond with G-d, they each bring to the experience the richness of their own creative souls.

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebb)

Haftarah for Naso in a Nutshell

Judges 13:2-25

This week's haftarah describes the birth of Samson, a lifetime nazirite. It echoes the section in this week's reading, which discusses all the laws of the nazirite.

Manoah and his wife, members of the Tribe of Dan, were childless. One day an angel appeared to Manoah's wife, informing her that she will give birth to a child. This child, the angel instructed, was to be a lifetime nazirite. In addition, the angel instructed her to abstain from all foods forbidden to a nazirite — such as wine or ritually impure foods — from the moment she would conceive. The angel further informed the woman that her son will save the Jewish people from the Philistine oppression they were enduring at that time.

The soon-to-be-mother told her husband the good news. He entreated G-d to send His messenger again — they were unaware at the time that the messenger was an angel. G-d sent the angel again, and he repeated his instructions. Manoah and his wife then invited the angel to partake of a special meal they would prepare, but he declined. Instead he encouraged Manoah to offer the goat he wished to slaughter for the meal as a sacrifice to G-d. The angel then ascended to the heavens in the flame that devoured the sacrifice.

The haftarah ends with the birth of Samson: "And the lad grew, and G-d blessed him." ❖

From all of us at Anshei-Lubavitch, we hope and pray for the safety and health of you and your loved ones. May the Almighty protect us all and send complete healing to those who need healing. And may our world very soon find the ultimate cure to all diseases with the coming of Moshiach, sooner than we can imagine.

"It would be desirable that you establish the custom of reciting Tehillim — at least a few kapitlach — in shul during the weekdays as well. Convey to the congregants the words that my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, related: that reciting Tehillim protects [a person] from many undesirable matters and draws down abundant good for the needs of every single individual."

-- Lubavitcher Rebbe 16 Iyar, 5711

Good Shabbos to all!

שבת שלום גוט שבת!

