

DAF HASHAVUA

נשא | NASO

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 10.09pm
 Birmingham: 10.22pm
 Bournemouth: 10.17pm
 Cardiff: 10.28pm
 Dublin: 10.47pm
 Edinburgh: 11.03pm
 Glasgow: 11.11pm
 Hull: 10.39pm
 Leeds: 10.32pm
 Liverpool: 10.44pm
 Manchester: 10.38pm
 Nottingham: 10.33pm
 Sheffield: 10.39pm
 Southend: 10.05pm
 Southport: 10.48pm
 Jerusalem: 8.21pm



"May God bless you and watch over you. May God make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God raise His face towards you and grant you peace"
(Bemidbar 6:24-26)

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 4:21-37

Last week's sidra concluded with the detailing of the particular role of the descendants of Kehat, one of Levi's three sons, in taking down, transporting and re-assembling parts of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Torah now details the same for the descendants of Levi's other two sons, Gershon and Merari. A census is taken of each of these three families, counting men aged 30 to 50. The family of Kehat numbers 2,750.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 4:38-49

The family of Gershon numbers 2,630. The family of Merari numbers 3,200.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 5:1-10

The narrative switches back to the day that the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) began to function (Rosh Chodesh Nisan), as first discussed in parashat Shemini (Rashi). God tells Moshe to instruct the people to maintain the spiritual purity of the main camp, in which the *Mishkan* was situated, by sending away anyone who is ritually impure. The nation complies. A person who steals and then takes an oath denying the crime, before eventually admitting to the theft, must bring an offering and add a fifth to the amount stolen when paying back the victim.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'1) – 5:11-6:27

A married woman who secludes herself in a suspicious fashion with another man, and is warned by her husband not to seclude herself again but ignores the warning, is known as a *Sotah*. She brings a barley offering to the Temple, where a Kohen gives her water to drink. This miraculously proves her innocence or guilt. If she is guilty, the waters cause her (and the adulterer) to die. If she is innocent, the water will cause her to become more fertile than before (Rashi).

Point to Consider: *Why does the Sotah's offering not have oil poured on it or frankincense put over it? (see Rashi to 5:15)*

A person can decide to take a vow to become a

Nazir and abstain from wine and other produce of the vine. A *Nazir* is also prohibited from having a haircut and from coming into contact with a dead person, including a close relative. The Torah details the procedure if a *Nazir* mistakenly comes into contact with a dead person in the middle of the *Nazarite* term. At the end of the *Nazarite* term (whose length can vary), the *Nazir* shaves his hair, brings unleavened bread offerings and three animal offerings. Aharon and his sons are commanded to bless the nation with the priestly blessing (*birkat kohanim*).

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 7:1-41

On Rosh Chodesh Nisan, the leaders of all of the tribes bring gifts of six wagons and twelve oxen to help the Levi'im transport the *Mishkan*. These leaders also take turns to bring voluntary offerings, which are sacrificed on the first 12 days of the *Mishkan's* functioning. The leader of the tribe of Yehuda gives a silver bowl and a silver basin filled with fine flour and oil for a meal offering; a gold ladle filled with incense; a bull, a ram and a sheep as elevation offerings (*olah*); a goat as a sin offering (*chatat*) and two cattle, five rams, five goats and five sheep as peace offerings (*shelamim*). The Torah lists the identical offerings of the other 11 leaders, starting with Yisachar, Zevulun, Reuven and Shimon.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 7:42-71

The offerings of the leaders of Gad, Ephraim, Menashe, Binyamin and Dan are listed.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'1) – 7:72-89

The offerings of the leaders of Asher and Naftali are detailed. The total value of all the items offered is given at the end of the sidra.

HAFTARAH (SHOFETIM 13:2-25)

An angel of God appears to the wife of Manoach and tells her that she will bear a son who will be a *Nazir* and will help save Israel from the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). She names him Shimshon (Samson).



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United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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A SINGULAR SHALOM: HOW THE SMALLEST WORD CARRIES THE BIGGEST MESSAGE

BY: **SHIFRA CHESLER**

Community Liaison Manager, Tribe

My children love a game called “word association”. One person says a word, and the next person responds with whatever word comes to mind. It’s simple, always entertaining, and often ends in laughter at the unexpected directions it takes.

If we were to play that game right now, and I began with the word “peace,” I imagine many of you would instinctively respond with “world.” Because when we think of peace, our minds naturally travel towards the idea of world peace - a world without war, a world where people can live without fear, a world where no one wakes up worried that harm might come to them. And of course, especially as we think about our brothers and sisters in Israel, this is a dream we all deeply share.

Yet in this week’s *parasha*, we encounter the priestly blessing, which ends with the words: **“Vayasem lecha shalom”** - *“May Hashem grant you peace”* (*Bemidbar* 6:26).

What stands out is that the word “you” is singular. If world peace is so central to our hopes and prayers, why is this blessing addressed to the individual?

The answer is profound. The most essential form of peace in Judaism - the peace with which the

Kohanim (priests) bless the entire nation, and with which parents have blessed their children every Friday night for thousands of years, is *inner* peace. A calmness of the soul. A sense of grounding. A heart at rest.

Why is personal peace so foundational?

On a micro level, when a person lacks inner peace, everything becomes harder. Their work suffers. Creativity becomes blocked. Relationships strain - whether with God, family or friends. A lack of inner calm ripples outward, touching everyone nearby.

Now imagine this on a macro level. A world where millions of individuals are living without inner stability. What happens then? Impatience grows. Families fracture. People lash out. Violence increases. Wars begin. A lack of inner peace does not stay contained within the individual - it spills outward, until the whole world feels its effects.

There is a well known parable about a man who desperately wanted to change the world. When he failed, he tried to change his country. When that did not work, he focused on his city, then his community, and

“ A lack of inner peace does not stay contained within the individual - it spills outward, until the whole world feels its effects.

finally his family. Only when he could not change any of them did he turn inward to change himself. And through that inner work... he ultimately transformed the world.

So, if your instinct in our word association game was “peace → world,” you were not wrong. That *is* the dream. That is *Tikkun Olam* - a world rooted in kindness, morality and peace. But this blessing reminds us of the path to get there. We do not begin with the world. We begin with the individual - with ourselves.

Our world is made up of 8.2 billion individuals. Imagine if each one carried a sense of inner peace. Imagine the collective impact. The world that would emerge is the world I aspire to live in.





THE COMMENTATORS: RABEINU BACHYA

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**

US Director of Education, Interim rabbi at Belmont US

The Spain into which Rabeinu Bachya was born was going through a period of significant political and cultural development. With the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate outside of Granada, Christian rule returned to the Iberian Peninsula. Cultural life expanded, influencing Rabeinu Bachya's education, especially as Jewish and Arabic texts were translated into Spanish and Latin, bringing their teachings to a broader audience.

This context provides a backdrop to Rabeinu Bachya's distinctive contribution to *parshanut* (Biblical commentary), which he sets out in his introduction. It has been published separately to the standard *Mikraot Gedolot* (Chumash with commentaries).

Aware of the philosophical developments of the age, Rabbi Bachya starts each *parasha* commentary with a verse from *Mishlei* (the Book of Proverbs), part of the Biblical wisdom literature, often with an ethical focus to frame the impact of the upcoming explanations.

Another innovation was to construct his commentary on the four pillars of Biblical interpretation:¹

- **Peshat:** The plain meaning of the text
- **Remez:** A deeper philosophical reading of the text

- **Drush:** A homiletical approach (*drasha*)
- **Sod:** A kabbalistic approach

Scholarly consensus is that *sod* was his preferred pillar. Rabeinu Bachya wrote his own commentary in the early 1290s, relatively early on in his life, particularly influenced by his own teacher, Rashba (1235–1310), and Ramban (1190–1274). Let's consider an example, part of a lengthy commentary. It might differ from how you usually understand the Torah!

The text of the priestly blessings, *Birkat Kohanim* (*duchaning*) appears in *Parashat Naso*, with this introduction:

"And God spoke to Moses: speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: this – (כה, koh) is how you should bless the Children of Israel..." (Bemidbar 7:23).

The word *koh* is noteworthy.

Starting with *peshat*, Rabeinu Bachya states that *koh* simply indicates the text of the *Birkat Kohanim*.

Applying *drush*, Rabeinu Bachya quotes the *Midrash Tachuma*², which highlights the *gematria* (numerical value) of the word *koh*, 25. The *Kohanim*, says the *Midrash*, receive 24 gifts/tithes (*matenot keuhna*) from the Children of Israel, and with this gift from God

RABEINU BACHYA

Name: Rabbi Bachya ben Asher

Known as: Rabeinu Bachya (or Bachaye)

Lived: c. 1255-1340

Locations: Born in Saragossa, Spain, where he later served as rabbi. Studied in Barcelona at the yeshiva of Rashba (Rabbi Shimon ben Aderet, 1235-1310)

Selected works: Commentary on the Torah, ethical work *Kad Hakemach*, commentary on *Pirkei Avot*

Further reading: Rabeinu Bachya on the Torah (Hebrew, ed. Rabbi Dr. C. Chavel); Torah Commentary by Rabbi Bachya ben Asher (English, trans./ed. Eliyahu Munk)



of the ability to bless the people, have 25 in total.

Mixing *remez* and *drush*, he explains various laws of *Birkat Kohanim* and how they are derived. For example, the *Kohanim* must raise their arms, administer the blessings in Hebrew and raise their voices.

Turning to *sod*, as represented by *Kabbala*, he establishes that the word used to introduce the priestly blessing, *koh*, is the one always employed by the prophets when they convey messages they have received from God to deliver to the Jewish people. A well-known example is '*koh amar Hashem*, thus says God', signifying *chesed*, kindness. The job of the *Kohanim* in blessing the people is to channel that *chesed* from God to the world.

Rabeinu Bachya's creative approach spawned several other commentaries and continues to influence Judaism today.

¹ See Talmud *Chagiga* 14b, for example.

² *Naso* 9



ESTABLISHING COMMUNITIES WITH **VOLUNTEERING AT THE HEART**

BY: **SHARON DANIELS**

Head of Chesed and Volunteering

Parashat Naso is about the creation of a community – counting people, setting up structures, and assigning responsibilities. It continues the census of the Israelites, delegates roles to different groups, details sacred duties, and establishes the framework that allows a wandering people to become a functioning community.

In this *parasha*, different groups are given different roles. Some carry the sacred vessels, others the curtains, others the beams and sockets. No task is described as more glamorous or important than another. Every role is essential and is valued. The creation of a community depends on a network of people willing to do what is needed.

Perhaps the most notable section of this *parasha* is the repetition of the offerings of the leaders of each tribe. The Torah is generally

sparing with its words, with succinct verses and chapters providing fodder for reams and generations of interpretation, discussion and even *machlokot* (disputes). So why, in *Parashat Naso*, are 72 verses dedicated to repeating the identical offerings, each of 35 items, brought by leaders of the twelve Tribes on consecutive days? The *Midrash (Bemidbar Rabbah 13 & 14)* explains that, while the twelve tribes made identical offerings, each experienced it differently, and each delivered it in their own unique way, and with their own intentions. Each leader brings the exact same gift, and the Torah repeats each one in full. It seems repetitive and redundant at first, but the message is profound: every contribution matters. Even when two offerings look identical, each act of giving is unique because it comes from a different person, with a different intention. So too with volunteers. Two people might perform the same task – serving kiddush, welcoming people to shul, making phone calls to isolated members, being part of the shul Council – but each act carries the distinct imprint of the person doing it. Their presence, their kindness, their intention – these are what make the act meaningful.

A synagogue community,

“ We recognise and value what so many United Synagogue members bring to their communities and to the wider world; not just the acts volunteers perform, but the meaning, intention and care that each person brings.

like the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), does not stand on its own. It is not sustained only by Rabbis or professional staff, but by the consistent efforts of an army of volunteers. JPR's 'Jewish in the UK today' 2024 survey found that almost a third of Jews have volunteered for their synagogue in the past year, as well as almost three quarters having volunteered for a range of other causes both within the Jewish community and beyond.

As we begin Volunteers' Week, 1-7 June, a national celebration of volunteering, we recognise and value what so many United Synagogue members bring to their communities and to the wider world; not just the acts volunteers perform, but the meaning, intention and care that each person brings. Thank you to all our incredible volunteers!





SEFER YIRMIYAHU (JEREMIAH) – PART 4

THE POWER OF TESHUVA

BY: **PNINA SAVERY**

Ma'ayan and US Educator

King Yoshiyahu inherited a kingdom filled with idolatry. However, later in his reign, he leads a national *teshuva* (repentance) movement, which rids the kingdom of idolatry. This leads the prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) to give messages of hope: following the repentance of the people, the decree of destruction can be averted.

Chapter 18 is an excellent example of such a prophecy. God instructs Yirmiyahu to visit a potter's workshop, where the prophet observes a potter beginning afresh after his lump of clay "was spoiled". God states: "as this potter, can I not do to you, O house of Israel?" (*Yirmiyahu* 18:6). The message is clear: just as the potter can destroy his broken vessel and rework his clay to something more befitting its quality, so too God can destroy the Jewish people as befits their actions.

Most commentators understand this prophecy as an expression of God's Divine

“ God explains that He will act according to the actions of the people: if they sin, He will punish, if they repent, He will reward.

power to punish and reward accordingly. Clay, a passive, inanimate object in the hands of a potter, is an interesting choice for this analogy. Does this imply that we have no influence upon the Divine outcome? What would be the point of *teshuva* if we are passively in the hands of God?

However, closer examination of the parable of the potter in *Yirmiyahu* leads us to a somewhat different conclusion. Ancient pottery, similar to modern day pottery, involved throwing clay onto a fast-moving wheel. This process creates a centrifugal force. The clay presses against the hands of the potter and is never fully passive in the process. The same is true of the people. The will of God is sovereign, yet the people have a will of their own and are able to exert this against Him.

The continuation of Yirmiyahu's prophecy strengthens this idea. God explains that He will act according to the actions of the people: if they sin, He will punish, if they repent, He will reward. Thus, we see that while God and the potter are both more powerful than their subjects, both the people and the clay are not entirely passive.

This prophecy forms the basis of a famous *piyyut* (poem) that we recite on Yom Kippur: "Like

“ Whilst God is sovereign, and we are ultimately “in His hands”, we still have the ability to assert our will and impact the Divine plan.

clay in the hand of the potter, He expands it at will and contracts it at will, so are we in Your hand”.

Just like in Yirmiyahu's prophecy, we are reminding ourselves that we do have an active role in the process. Whilst God is sovereign, and we are ultimately “in His hands”, we still have the ability to assert our will and impact the Divine plan.

Destruction was decreed during the time of King Menashe, Yoshiyahu's predecessor.

However, Yirmiyahu urges the people to remember that there is still hope. If the people repent with sincerity, God will annul the evil decree. Right up until the final *Churban* (destruction of the Temple), Yirmiyahu will still be urging the people to repent to avoid any further destruction.

The real question remains: will the people's repentance be sincere?

THE TRIBE WEEKLY



NASO

29-30 MAY | 14 SIVAN

THE POWER OF JOY



BY: **ABI MENESSON**

Tribe gap year student

Parashat Naso is packed with interesting topics. Included is the priestly blessing which *Kohanim* recite every day in Israel and on Yom Kippur and Yom Tov outside of Israel. However, there are conditions to this blessing. Our sages teach that God's spirit dwells only where there is the

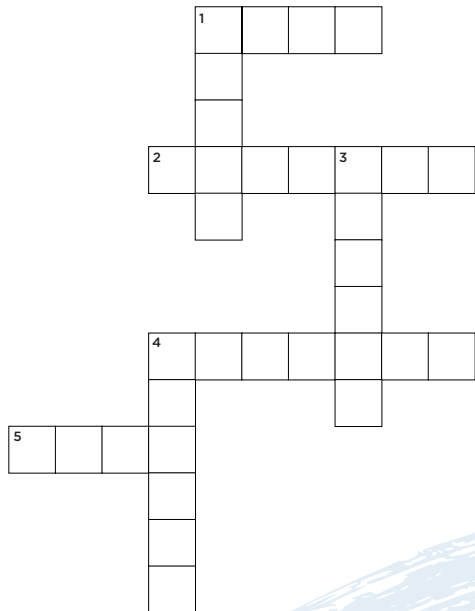
joy of carrying out His will. This is why both prophecies and blessings require an attitude of joy. Why is this the case?

Joy can be seen as the opposite of isolation. A separation from God, oneself and others distances a person from joy. When we are removed from God, we feel the weight of our sins separating us from holiness and creating sadness within us. When we are removed from ourselves, through our many worldly distractions, it keeps us from the joy of studying Torah and other

pursuits that enable us to express our inner goodness. And when we are removed from others, through isolation or competition, we lack the feeling of happiness that we get from connecting with others.

It is therefore through the joy of connecting to God, others and ourselves that we are able to give and receive blessings in our lives. By being happy and spreading positivity, we can enable not only our own lives but also the lives of others to be enriched with blessings.

Parasha Crossword



Down:

- Someone who takes a vow not to drink wine or cut their hair
- The Hebrew word for sacrifice, or offering
- The minimum age you had to be to serve in the *Mishkan*

Across:

- This week's parasha
- The Tabernacle
- Like leprosy
- The tribe in charge of carrying the *Mishkan* and its accessories



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

NASO: GAME ON!

A PSYCHOLOGIST CALLED **ABRAHAM MASLOW** TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT KINDS OF NEEDS - LIKE LEVELS IN A GAME.

FIRST COME THE BASICS TO LIVE: **FOOD, WATER AND SLEEP - OTHERWISE... GAME OVER!**

THEN WE NEED TO FEEL SAFE; LIKE HAVING A HOME AND PEOPLE WHO PROTECT US.

AFTER THAT, WE NEED FRIENDS AND BELONGING, AND TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES.



AND THE TOP LEVEL? BECOMING THE BEST VERSION OF YOU - USING YOUR TALENTS TO DO GREAT THINGS.

NEEDS MET!

IN THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA OF NASO** WE FIND THE **BIRKAT KOHANIM** (PRIESTLY BLESSING) WHICH ALSO BUILDS UP STEP BY STEP.

FIRST, IT'S ABOUT PHYSICAL THINGS: HAVING WHAT WE NEED AND BEING PROTECTED - THREE **HEBREW** WORDS.

בְּרַכְּתָּהּ וְיִשְׁמְרָתָּה

NEEDS & PROTECTION 3

LEVEL 1

PROFESSOR NECHAMA LEIBOVITZ (1905 - 1997) EXPLAINS THAT THE BLESSING GETS LONGER WITH EACH LINE; EACH ONE MORE GENEROUS THAN THE LINE BEFORE.

NEXT, IT LIFTS US HIGHER - TO **SPIRITUAL LIGHT: TORAH,** CONNECTION, AND CLOSENESS TO **GOD,** INCREASING TO FIVE **HEBREW** WORDS.

וְיָמְרָהּ פְּנִי אֱלֹהֵי קוֹל שְׁלָמִים

אֲדָרָהּ פְּנִי אֱלֹהֵי קוֹל שְׁלָמִים

5
SPIRITUAL LIGHT

LEVEL 2



THEN COMES THE BIG FINISH: EVERYTHING BLENDS TOGETHER WITH THE GREATEST BLESSING OF ALL - **PEACE!** THIS LINE OF THE BLESSING USES SEVEN WORDS AND REFLECTS A MERGING OF BOTH THE PREVIOUS GIFTS.

THE **TORAH** SHOWS US THAT THE GOAL ISN'T JUST TO HAVE MORE, OR EVEN JUST TO GROW MORE. OUR GOAL IS ALSO TO BRING HARMONY TO THE **SPIRITUAL** AND **PHYSICAL** IN OUR LIVES. WHEN WE DO THAT, WE BECOME THE BEST VERSION OF OURSELVES AND LIVE IN **SHALOM**. I'D LIKE A **PEACE** OF THAT!



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.