

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל-מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT NASO

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בס"ד



BIRKAT KOHANIM

ANNA FIRESTONE
SHEVET SEENAI

Parashat Naso begins with a census of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem communi-

cates to Moshe the halachot of the Sotah and Nazir. He then gives Aaron and his descendants, who are the kohanim, the instructions to bless the People of Israel. The bracha starts with,

יְבַרְכֶה ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ
יְאֵר ה' פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִחַנֶּךָ
יֵשֵׁא ה' פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִשְׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

May Hashem bless you and safeguard you, May Hashem illuminate Himself for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift his face to you and establish peace for you.

Many of you will recognise this blessing as it is what the Kohanim bless us with and what a father and mother will say on Friday night, but what does it actually mean? The bracha is composed of three parts. The first containing three words, in memory of our three fathers, Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov. The second part is made of five words, alike to the 5 books of the Torah. Finally, the third part is made up of 7 words, reminding us that on the 7th day Hashem created Shabbat, our day of rest. So how do these relate?

We begin by looking back into our history and seeing that without Avraham, Judaism wouldn't exist. He was the first person to acknowledge Hashem as the only G-d in a time full of idolatry. He saw Hashem's presence even in a time of complete evil. Then we move to the Torah, which is the body of wisdom and law for living a Jewish life. Without it we would not know how to live in Hashem's beautiful world. Lastly, Shabbat is the holiest day of the week. For 6 days we live in the material world, but on shabbat we try to become attuned to holiness.

Rav Kook states that while the first bracha refers to

Hashem's assistance in the material realm, the second bracha speaks of enlightenment and spiritual attainments. But this might sound daunting to live with, as having greater enlightenment means there is greater responsibility. As we grow in knowledge and wisdom, we are expected to display a higher level of moral sensitivity. Our thoughts should be purer, our character traits more refined and our lives more ethical.

If one was to think about this deeply, it may seem scary, and one could become discouraged. Therefore, the kohanim finish the blessing with "May Hashem lift His face towards you." To lift one's face is a Hebrew idiom meaning to give special consideration or leniency. The Kohanim bless us that despite the expectations which come with a higher spiritual level, we should not lose heart. Hashem will be lenient, taking into account the physical reality that we live in. One may still feel uneasy with this leniency so the final bracha closes with a gift of peace – peace of mind.

The 16th century commentator Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aharon (Kli Yakar) notes that the directionality of these verses goes from Hashem the one above, to his people below. The first verse is blessing and protection from Hashem to the Bnei Yisrael. The second verse is one of face to face knowing and supporting another and the final verse is one of elevation and peace. Just as the relationship between Hashem and Israel evolved from Sea to Sinai and beyond, so too in our homes or on Machane, do we witness miraculous journeys of relationships going beyond gender, hierarchy, title, definition etc. We read from Rabbi Chanina in the Talmud in Taanit 7A, "I have learned much from my teachers, even more from my friends but from my students I have learned more than from all of them." This is the aspiration, a pathway to peace. By reading the Kohanim's blessings every Friday night, we are creating a pathway of personal evolution that leads us to shlemut (a state of peace or wholeness) and this is an expression of the empowerment of those who may at one time have been below us but now rise around us.

ANNA IS A MADRICHA AT BOREHAMWOOD SVIVA

SHABBAT TIMES

London	In 21:01 Out 22:31	Oxford	In 21:04 Out 22:38	Leeds	In 21:17 Out 23:02
Manchester	In 21:21 Out 23:01	Bristol	In 21:07 Out 22:41	Liverpool	In 21:20 Out 23:03
Cambridge	In 21:01 Out 22:37	Birmingham	In 21:10 Out 22:48	Jerusalem	In 19:09 Out 20:27

PSYCHOLOGY AND TORAH WITH ELAD ESHEL

PARASHAT NASO: FINDING YOUR SPACE



The opening parashiot of Sefer Bamidbar detail the layout of the camp of Bnei Yisrael as they begin their journey through the desert. A census is taken, and everyone is assigned their set place for encampment and for travel, surrounding the Levi'im who themselves surround the Mishkan in the very centre.

In the middle of this week's parasha, we have several parashiot that at first don't seem connected to this overarching theme: Birkat Kohanim, removal of tumah from the camp, the return of stolen property steals, the laws of the Sotah, and the laws of a Nazir. However, we need to understand that the Torah is in fact trying to establish the camp of the Jewish People, not as a travel formation, but rather as a broader ordering of the nascent Jewish society, with the Mishkan as its focal point. The layout that the Torah details is not only of a practical nature but reflects the creation of a spiritual society that needs to take many elements into account in terms of its structure and function.

In Sefer Bamidbar the Torah is explaining the role the Mishkan will play in the society. Birkat Kohanim, removal of the t'mei'im establish the relationship and responsibilities of the Kohanim and the rest of the people both to the camp and to each other. The laws of returning stolen objects and of Sotah, establish the primacy of the Mishkan in establishing order and peace not only in spiritual matters but also in mundane social issues – within the family and between citizens. Order in society is brings not only functionality and efficiency, but also a feeling of security and calm brought on by confidence in the structure and allows for the sanctity of the Mishkan to remain amongst the people.

But then we have the Nazir which seems to turn everything on its head. Their hair is left unkempt and unruly. They, as a non-kohen, begins to act like a kohen, not coming in contact with the dead and not drinking wine (just as the kohanim are prohibited when serving in the Mishkan). What is the place of the Nazir in the camp? And what is it doing in our parasha?

Interestingly, the element of the growing of the hair is exactly the opposite of a kohen, who must keep his hair well kept (see Vayikra 10:6). By contrast, other times we find people growing their hair is by a

metzora and an avel, wherein the growing of the hair is associated with being removed from society. So, what is this unique element of hair that it plays this central role in the nazir package? Our hair is unlike the rest of our body. It is something that we are able to cut, to stylise, to manage, to control. It is part of our body – physically connected and fixed, but also is almost like an item of clothing, as its malleability also lends its use as a mode of self-expression and identity.

Our bodies are the most personal part of ourselves. They are our physical makeup, the expression of our genes. Clothes are entirely external; they are how we present ourselves to the world, and we are informed by the world about what is an appropriate way to dress. Hair functions as the junction between these two spheres – it is both part of our innate physical being, but also something that we can control and adapt to how we want to present ourselves.

The social expectation surrounding how hair should be managed and presented, are reflective of the broader construct of limitation and expectations of that society places upon us, as a means to create order and structure.

But the danger of this ordered, structured framework for society and spirituality, as detailed in these parashiot, is that the individual, who must restrain himself in order to remain included, can become engulfed by the external demands to the extent that they cannot succeed in expressing his individuality and engage with his natural, spiritual orientations. Comes along the parasha of Nazir – concluding the Torah's structuring of the camp of Israel on the physical, social, and religious planes – and provides a space for the Nazir. The Nazir, who is 'Lashem,' seeking their spiritual fulfilment, grows their hair, leaving the society which they find stifling and restricting, to find their own space within the greater framework of avodat Hashem.

The opening parashiot of Sefer Bamidbar teach us the value and importance of creating a society that is ordered and structured, with clear boundaries and the delineation of roles, duties, and boundaries. And yet, the Torah appreciates that the individual who feels restrained by the social environment he lives in, must be given the space, outside regular society, to engage in an open, directed process of self-discovery and find their individual path to connect with Hashem.

SNAPSHOT FROM THE CHOVERET

The Bnei Mitzvah Programme Choveret is the educational handbook that Bnei Akiva UK madrichim have used to create their activities and discussions in Sviva over the past 5 weeks for the Bnei Mitzvah programme. Here is an excerpt that talks about the nature of giving.

At dinner, one of the Kotzke Rebbe's students once commented that they loved fish. The Kotzke Rebbe pointed out that if they loved fish, they would not be eating the fish. Rather, they love the feeling that the fish gives them.

In Pirkei Avot, this distinction is made between conditional love and unconditional love. From a Jewish point of view, unconditional love, love for a higher purpose, is a more noble form of love. This type of love stems from giving. In fact the root of the Hebrew word for love, אהבה means "to give."



One can fully understand the significance of this using the following story. A girl was very impressed at the solidarity and commitment displayed in her grandparents' relationship. She decided to interview them both on how they remain so loving and committed to each other and how they make their marriage last. Her grandpa explained that it is through simple acts of giving that he loves his wife more every day. For example, when they fly, he always gives grandma the window seat even though he would prefer it, because he knows she likes it. To the girl's dismay, when she interviewed her grandma she said a similar thing! She always gives grandpa the aisle seat even though she would prefer it because she knows he likes it. The question to present to your Chanichim is do you tell your grandparents that they have miscommunicated? The answer is no! Because through their act of giving and sacrifice they

are strengthening their love for one another.

On a deeper level, Judaism believes in 5 successive levels of the soul that correspond to 5 increasing levels of giving. As Jews, we live to give. We give to our family and community around us and come to love them. We give to future generations and come to love them. And of course, we give to Hashem and come to love Him.

BNEI AKIVA TERMINOLOGY

You may have noticed that there are quite a few words in Hebrew that pop up in Shabbat Lashem from time to time! Here are a few commonly used 'BA words.' Why not test everyone at your Shabbat table on them?

Tafkid - Position

Tzevet - Team

Hadracha - Leadership

Hanhallah - National Executive

Tochnit - Activity

Ruach - Spirited Song

Sviva - Local Branch

Did you know that there are currently 17 active Svivot in Bnei Akiva UK?



WHAT'S GOING ON?

- Lishmah is now open to all **Bogrot and Sixth-Formers!** Don't miss this amazing **Torah learning opportunity!** Sign up: tinyurl.com/Lishmah-BA

- Calling all male Bogrim! Join **Rav Joel** for a **Va'ad** on Tuesday evenings at 10:15!

- **London Student Bet Midrash** is taking place weekly on **Thursday evenings** for high school and university students. For more info about London or Birmingham SBM email chinuch@bauk.org

- Keep an eye out for exciting **Bnei Akiva** updates for all ages!

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to get regular updates with what is going on in the Tnuva.

- Visit bauk.org/feedback for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

 The Senior Rabbi's Office
in partnership with Bnei Akiva UK 

16-24 YEAR OLDS ARE INVITED TO

**MENTAL
HEALTH &
HALAKHA**

**W. RABBI YONI
ROSENWEIG**

**SUNDAY 19TH JUNE
6.30PM - 8PM
NW LONDON LOCATION**

Pizza and Shi'ur followed by Q&A

What is the relationship between mental health and halakha and how do we deal with it? Why haven't Jewish books dealt with mental health until now? Join us for this unique opportunity to meet and learn from the leading expert on mental health and halakha.

Rabbi Yoni Rosensweig is the Founder of the Ma'aglei Nefesh Center for Mental Health, the Rabbi of Netzach Menashe Community in Bet Shemesh (Israel), and teacher in Midreshet Lindenbaum. He has authored several books, including the recently published and ground-breaking work on the interplay between Mental Health and Halakha.

Limited spaces, book now: SeniorRabbi.com/ravyoni

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