

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

NASO

June 2, 2012

12 Sivan 5772

Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach Schedule and Announcements

Follow us on twitter @BenaiAsher for a daily dose of Torah, Israel or something of interest
Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Thank you to the anonymous donor for donating the basketball hoop for the kids.

Friday Night: Candles: 8:03PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Mazal Tov to the Abittan family on Ariel's wedding in Memphis. We hear it was a magnificent wedding and that Elvis is coming to Sheva Berachot this weekend.

David is away this week as his nephew is getting married – Rabbi Colish will give the Derasha and Rabbi Siegel will give the class at Seudat Shelishi

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM

Please say Shemah at home by 8:17 AM

Soul Schmoozing Shabbat Mornings 11:30 AM for teenage girls with Leah Colish.

We had no sponsors for Kiddush – We want to thank Herman and Rebecca for doing a Costco run for us and taking care of the Kiddush and Seudah Shelishi

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:45 PM –

Childrens program at 6:45 with Rabbi Colish followed by Minha: 7:30 PM

Seudah Shelishi and a Class 8:00 – Megilat Ruth

Evening Service (Arbith): 8:50 PM - Shabbat Ends: 9:03PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00,

It seems Sunday, when almost everyone is around is the hardest day to get ten to come on time

Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

This Sunday is the Israeli Day Parade so we will not have classes nor the art project. Enjoy the Parade!

6:30 AM class – Shelah Hakadosh on the Perasha

Rabbi Eliyahu Yanay's class, we will continue it thanks to Gregory and Boris Safaniev on Monday night June 4th at 8:00PM – Mincha and Arbit at 7:30

Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30:

Basar BeChalav – With Michael and David

Hebrew Reading Crash Course Starting Monday June 18th in the Study 8-9 PM and continuing Monday Nights throughout the Summer. Beginner and intermediate levels welcome!

Ladies Shabbat Class at the home of Tina Lemberger – each Shabbat at 5:30

Kiddush Celebrating Dan and Daniella Kahen – Shabbat Shelach LeCha – June 16th - Sponsors include: Mr. and Mrs. Jack Azizo, Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Mizrahi, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Yusupov, Mr. David Pinto, Mr. Ronen Yadgarov, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Yadgarov. Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Levi, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Yusupov- \$100, Mr. and Mrs. Greg Safaniev, Mr. and Mrs. Steward Austin- \$100, George and Sofia Davydov- \$100, Mr. and Mrs. Leon Sutton. To participate as a sponsor, please speak with Albert Yusupov We look forward to Aliza and Ephraim Bulow visiting with us that Shabbat – Shelach Lecha – 26th of Sivan as well.

NEED PLANTS?

The Rabbi's gardens are overflowing with extra plants. For a minimum of \$5.00, (check made out to the Sisterhood) you can have cone flowers (perennials), Russian sage, prickly pear cactus (sabro), ornamental grasses straw flowers and, of course, mint. See Phyllis to arrange to get the plants or call her at 432-8637. And thank her for doing such a beautiful job in the garden

Be Careful in the Ocean

Excerpted From The Long Beach Patch ... Lifeguards Make Four Rescues on Memorial Day

With thousands of people enjoying the sand and ocean off Long Beach on Memorial Day, lifeguards faced a few close calls,

At about 6:15 p.m., an emergency response team was called to Long Beach Boulevard beach, where a woman and man who were in distress in the water. Paul Gillespie, chief of Long Beach lifeguards, said that the man, who he estimated was at least in his late 50s, was jogging along the shore noticed the woman in distress and entered the water to try to rescue her but got also caught up in the surf.

"She went in the water and the guy got her almost out of the water, but he became a victim along with her," Gillespie said. "The lifeguards pulled the both of them in. They were both in bad shape when we brought them in."

Gillespie said that the woman, who was in her early 20s, was intoxicated and was transported to Long Beach Medical Center along with her would-be rescuer.

Long Beach Boulevard beach was still relatively crowded at 6 p.m., after lifeguard shifts end for the day, Gillespie observed, and many people were on the boardwalk there waiting to get on the beach at the time, when people are no longer charged to get onto the beach.

At 8:20 p.m. at the same beach, the Long Beach Police Department was notified about a possible swimmer in distress. A police officer arrived at the scene and observed a male youth in distress in the water, according to Sgt. Eric Cregeen, the

department's public information officer.

"Police officer Fales used an inflatable rescue stick but the youth was unable to grab it," Cregeen said. The officer entered the water and grabbed the victim. "The child was safely brought back to shore and was transported to South Nassau Communities Hospital [in Oceanside] for evaluation and treatment," Cregeen added.

Gillespie noted that this rescue was at the exact same spot as the prior rescue. There is a large hole along the shore next to the jetty on that beach, he said, and the rip currents on Monday were stronger than usual, making the spot a more dangerous place to enter the water.

"If you go in the water near there and you just take step in there, you're going to get sucked out," he said. "It's a very treacherous position there. We've lost a lot of people who have drowned at that jetty." See the Patch for the rest of the article

Rebooting and Rewiring

Last weekend with Shabbat going into Shavuot and this coinciding with the Memorial Day weekend, many of us had the opportunity to not only disconnect from cell phones, email, texts, television and radio, but to do so, when we knew, because of the coinciding American holiday that whatever might be happening around us was probably not very important or urgent. When I looked at my phone on Monday night and saw that instead of the thousand plus emails three days would bring, there were less than a hundred, I smiled.

There is tremendous value in 72 hours of disconnecting. Our brain gets to reset.

On Sunday morning I returned home from Tikun Lel Shavuot where we stay up all night and then pray at sunrise. I sat for a few minutes looking out onto the empty beach and the rolling waves, feeling the breeze coming from the south and seeing rain clouds pushing in from the west. It was so peaceful. I took in a breath and smiled inside and out.

I thought that on a typical day, how many minutes could possibly pass without my fumbling for the iPhone. We check our mail, click onto the news, review a class, look at a book, hear some music or play a video. And now, no phone and not even a wonder of what was happening anywhere else. At that moment it was only the scene in front of me and my thoughts over what we discussed the previous night and that morning.

The midrashim tell us that when the Israelites heard the first commandment, they were blown away and their souls left them. Angels came down and revived them with dew.

One might ask what the point of this is. Why do we need to know that they heard, they died and then they were born again?

Consider that this theme of rebirth is repeated in many ways. Abraham being thrown into the fire, Isaac at the Akeydah where his soul flies up to heaven, Jacob fighting an angel, Joseph in the pit, Moses escaping the executioner in Egypt before fleeing to Midyan, and on and on throughout the Torah and Navi.

It seems that to move on, we often need to disconnect from the past or at least from something associated with our past and be born again. We need to reboot.

On Shavuot as we again stood at Sinai, we had the chance to reboot. But to reboot, we need to first shut down all the applications we are running, the phone, the email, the news, the media player and the browser. We disconnect and then start up again. And doing that frees up our resources and gives us the chance to really say that this is the first day of the rest of my life.

This week we read of the Nazir who possibly seeing the effects of wine on the marriage of the Sotah, swears off wine himself. He goes through his Nazirite period and in essence reboots. But the reboot accomplishes more than restarting. The reboot allows us to reconsider our priorities, it allows us to reprogram and rewire our system. It allows us to become a new entity, not just a version of what we were, but a new person with new dreams and a new plan to get there.

We see that someone who suffers what might be a fatal heart attack and then survives often has a new lease on life. Someone who has miraculously survived some accident comes back with new eyes. We hear them tell us that they can see what should be appreciated. We see those new dreams, values, plans and commitments. Its like they see the world through new eyes.

G-d in his mercy realizes that man burdened by the past may have difficulty moving forward. If the slate is so full then what can we add to it? He allows us to wipe the slate clean. This happens on Rosh Hashana for the body and on Shavuot for the soul. But it can happen more often, Each Rosh Chodesh or each Shabbat or even every morning.

If we are cognizant of the opportunity and shut down all

systems and then start again with a new attitude and new slate we can take advantage of the gift that G-d is, HaMekadesh BeTuvo BeChol Yom Tamid, He who renews in his goodness each and every day. We can open our eyes and appreciate the blessing of pokeach Ivrim – thanking G-d who opens the eyes of the blind. We can get up from our complacency and appreciate the blessing HaMechin Misadey Gaver – thanking G-d for preparing our steps. In fact each of those morning blessings come to life if we focus on what they can mean to us.

72 hours is great and that really allows us to reset, but 72 minutes can work too – step away, shut down, step into your mind and talk to G-d. And I believe if we focus correctly and if that's all we have than even 72 seconds can do it. Take those 72 seconds and stop, breathe, look at that slate with all its mistakes and errors and in your mind, admit, regret and commit and then see yourself wipe that slate clean. As my mom always reminds me, today is the first day of the rest of your life.

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The family of Gershon is assigned to carry the curtains and tapestries of the Mishkan. The family of Merrari is assigned to carry the beams, poles, and sockets that comprised the walls of the Mishkan.

2nd Aliya: The families of Gershon and Merrari are counted.

3rd Aliya: The laws regarding sending out of the camp: the Mitzora, the Zav (a type of discharge), and anyone who has come in contact with a dead body, are stated. The law of

stealing from a convert (making restitution if someone steals from a convert who then dies without any heirs) is commanded.

4th Aliya: The laws and procedures for the Sotah - the accused adulteress; and the Nazir are explained.

5th, 6th, & 7th Aliyot: The Korbonos offered by the princes of each Shevet at the inauguration of the Mizbeach are listed.

Shoftim 13:2 - Around the year 2790 - 971 b.c.e., the Bnai Yisroel were subject to the rule of the Pilishtim. In the year 2810 - 951, Shimshon became the Judge - Shofet of the nation and served his people as both their greatest Tzadik and greatest warrior. This week's Haftorah tells the story of Manoach and his wife, the parents of Shimshon (Shoftim Cap. 13).

Manoach's wife was barren, and in response to her Tefilos, Hashem sent an Angel, disguised as a man, to tell Manoach's wife of her impending pregnancy. The child would have to be a Nazir from the moment of his conception, and he would grow up to save the Jews from their enemies.

Manoach requested from Hashem that the "man" appear a second time, and the Angel appeared a second time. The same instructions were repeated to both Manoach and his wife, after which Manoach invited the "man" to join them for a meal. The "man" refused the invitation but suggested to Manoach that he offer a Korban to Hashem. Manoach did so, and as the flame rose to consume the offering, the "man" entered the flames and disappeared. Manoach and his wife then realized that the "man" was really an Angel, and

understood the divine significance of their, yet to be born, child.

The connection to our Parsha is the fact that Shimshon was to be a Nazir. The commentaries explain that in contrast to the laws of the Sotah - the accused adulteress, it was the merit of Manoach's wife which brought about the birth of Shimshon.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Respecting the Bearers of the Ark

Parashat Naso begins by discussing the Gershon family of Leviyim. The tribe of Levi was assigned the responsibility of transporting the Mishkan when Beneh Yisrael traveled through the wilderness, and the three families of Leviyim – Gershon, Kehat and Merari – were assigned to different parts of the Mishkan. The end of last week's Parasha, Parashat Bamidbar, discussed the role of the Kehat family, and the Torah continues at the beginning of Parashat Naso by discussing the responsibilities assigned to Gershon.

The Keli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Efrayim Luntshitz, Prague 1550-1619) raises the question of why the Torah arranged its discussion in this sequence. Gershon was the oldest of the three sons of Levi, and yet the Torah first discusses the family of Kehat before the family of Gershon. The answer that is given, as the Keli Yakar cites, is that Kehat is mentioned first because this family had the distinction of carrying the Aron (ark). The Aron was, of course, the most sacred of all the articles of the Mishkan, and thus Kehat's role is described first because it included the holiest "cargo." However, the Keli Yakar points out, this answer just leads us to another question: why was the younger brother assigned the most distinguished role? Why

wasn't the family of Gershon, the oldest son of Levi, given the honor of transporting the Aron?

The Keli Yakar explains that this honor was given to Kehat precisely to demonstrate that the precedence of this family is due to the Aron. If the family of Gershon had carried the Aron, then we might have thought that the Torah discusses Gershon first simply because he was the oldest brother. God therefore granted this privilege to Kehat, so that Kehat would be presented first in the Torah, before the other two Levite families, and we would then understand that the Torah is giving honor to the tribe that transports the Aron. It had to be made clear that the family discussed first received this distinction not due to any factor other than its role as the bearers of the Aron. In this way, the Torah emphasizes the point that we should reserve the highest honors for those who carry the Aron, the Torah. The most important factor in determining who receives honor is Torah. Indeed, Halacha instructs that a Torah scholar of undistinguished lineage takes precedence over an ignorant Kohen Gadol when it comes to certain honors. The ones who deserve the most honor are the rabbis, the Torah scholars, and it was for the purpose of emphasizing this point that Kehat – the family of the younger brother – was given the role of carrying the Aron.

The Keli Yakar's insight should remind us to exercise care in how we relate to our rabbis. Torah scholarship is what should draw our respect and reverence – not wealth or social stature. We must respect, honor and admire the Torah scholars so that we heed their guidance and gain inspiration from their devotion to Torah. They, the ones who carry the "ark," our ancient Torah

tradition, are the ones deserving of the greatest honor and respect.

Rabbi Wein

The longest parsha of the Torah is the parsha of Naso, which we read publicly this Shabat. A great part of its length is due to the repetition of the offerings and gifts of the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel at the dedication of the Mishkan. Since each one of the twelve leaders brought the identical offering to the occasion and, furthermore, since the Torah itself at the conclusion of the parsha gives us a total summation of their offerings, the question naturally begs itself as to why the Torah should expend so many words and so much detail on this matter.

This question has troubled all of the commentators to the Torah and many divergent answers and opinions have been advanced to help explain the matter. All seem to be in agreement that the Torah wishes to emphasize the individual worth and contribution of each of these leaders of Israel and gave each one recognition by listing his offering individually.

While this explanation and insight is undoubtedly true, it seems not to be wholly satisfactory in light of the great length that the Torah goes to in its detail of every offering. Each of the leaders could have been mentioned by name without having to repeat the entire paragraph detailing his offering. And yet as the length of the parsha indicates, the Torah took no shortcuts regarding this matter. Even in kabbalistic thought and works, no clear explanation emerges regarding this anomaly of Torah writing.

It would be arrogant and foolish of me to advance any personal explanation of mine to address this difficulty. Though space has

been left for every generation of Jews to add their insights into the Torah there are areas where even angels should fear to tread. Just as with parsha of the red heifer, the Torah purposely offers up to us a rule that defies our rational powers of logic and explanation, so too are there are other areas of the Torah that defy our sense of proportion and human understanding.

I have always felt that this alone – the mystery of it all – is in itself a portion of what the Torah wishes to communicate to us with the repetition of the offerings of the leaders of Israel in this week's parsha. A Torah that makes perfect sense to the human mind can never be a Divine Torah. The mystery, even call it the illogic of certain sections of the Torah is itself the sign of its Divine origin.

The error of the "enlightened ones," the schools of biblical criticism and of many who deem themselves to be scholars in these matters is that they approach the Torah as they would approach any human work of wisdom or prose. If one approaches the Torah from the vantage point of it being a Divine document, mysterious and wondrous, greater than what the human mind can encompass, then the Torah takes on a different dimension in one's thoughts and life.

Perhaps this parsha is one of the many places where Jews can only stand back and wonder in awe as to the Divine wisdom that the Torah blesses us with even when we are unable to discern that wisdom clearly

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables Teamwork!

This week's portion, Naso, is not only the longest Parsha in the Torah, it may be the most divers

with topics ranging from counting the Children of Israel taken in the Sinai Desert, to a tally of the Leviim who will be doing the work of transporting the Mishkan. From the laws of the sotah, the wayward wife suspected of being unfaithful, to the laws of the nazir, one who rejects wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and is forbidden to become tamei, (contaminated through contact with a dead body).

The Torah also tells us of the daily blessings that the kohanim, Aaron and his descendants, bestow on the nation. Finally, the nessi'im, princes of the twelve tribes of Israel, each bring gifts for the inauguration of the Mishkan and the altar. Their korbonos offerings are identical, though each is brought on a different day and is individually described by the Torah.

But before the Torah discusses the altar offering, the Torah tells us about another princely gift. "They brought their offering before the Lord: six covered wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for each two chieftains, and an ox for each one; they presented them in front of the Mishkan" (Numbers 7:3). Those were meant to transport all the parts of the Mishkan in the sojourn in the desert and beyond. Rashi comments that for the work of the (building) the Mishkan they were not the first to contribute, they were the last, saying "Let the people contribute what they can, and then we will complement whatever is missing."

Unfortunately, the people had supplied everything-as it says, "And the work was sufficient for them" (Exodus. 36:7), and the nessi'im (princes) were left with the jewels for the ephod and the choshen . This time, in order to make amends, they were first to contribute" (see commentary on above verse).

What is interesting to note is that there were only six wagons for the 12 princes. Why did they need to team up in bringing wagons? They had enough money for each to bring a jewel, I am sure that each could have brought a wagon as well!

The Story: There is a famous story about Rav Akiva Eiger who was in a wagon together with the great Rav Yaakov Loberbaum of Lisa, the famed author of Nesivos HaMishpat on the way to Warsaw. They were approaching the outskirts of Warsaw in a coach. The whole city turned out to welcome the two great Torah Scholars. The crowd immediately unhitched the horses from the wagon so that the people could have the honor of pulling the chariot. Rav Akiva Eiger thought that all the honors were meant for his Rav Loberbaum and so he descended from the coach and to join the community in paying tribute to the visiting Rav of Lisa. Unbeknownst to him Rabbi Loberbaum, assumed that this great honor was for Rabbi Akiva Eiger and had also jumped out of the wagon from his side. Together with the leaders and the lay people of Warsaw, these two great leaders humbly pulled the empty carriage to the city honoring each other with no one there inside!

The Message: Perhaps when it comes to giving jewels, each nasi gave alone. But when it comes to the donating of wagons, perhaps, symbolically, the Nessi'im were sending a powerful yet subtle message, to the children of Israel. When we shlep, we shlep together. There is not one single person or group who must carry the load in transporting the items of the Mishkan. We must indeed help carry the load, but we must not carry it alone. We must carry it together with a partner.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

Sages and Saints

As mentioned in a previous Covenant and Conversation, there was an ongoing debate between the sages as to whether the nazirite – whose laws are outlined in today's parsha – was to be praised or not. Recall that the nazirite was someone who voluntarily, usually for a specified period, undertook a special form of holiness. This meant that he was forbidden to consume wine or any grape products, to have a haircut and to defile himself by contact with the dead.

Naziriteship was essentially a renunciation of desire. Why someone would choose to do this is not clear. It may be that wanted to protect himself against drunkenness or to cure himself of alcoholism. It could be that he wanted to experience a higher form of holiness. Forbidden as he was to have contact with the dead, even for a close relative, he was in this respect in the same position as the High Priest. Becoming a nazirite was one way in which a non-cohen could adopt cohen-like behaviour. Some sages argued that the juxtaposition of the law of the nazirite with that of the sotah, the woman suspected of adultery, hinted at the fact that there were people who became nazirites to protect themselves from sexual immorality. Alcohol suppresses inhibitions and increases sexual desire.

Be that as it may, there were mixed views on whether it was a good thing or a bad one to become a nazirite. On the one hand the Torah calls him "holy to G-d" (Num. 6: 8). On the other, at the completion of his period of

abstinence, he is commanded to bring a sin offering (Num. 6: 13-14). From this, Rabbi Eliezer Hakappar Berebi, drew the following inference:

What is the meaning of the phrase (Num. 6: 11), and make atonement for him, because he sinned against the soul (usually translated as "by coming into contact with the dead"). Against which soul did he sin? We must conclude that it refers to denying himself the enjoyment of wine. From this we may infer that if one who denies himself the enjoyment of wine is called a sinner, all the more so one who denies himself the enjoyment of other pleasures of life. It follows that one who keeps fasting is called a sinner. (Ta'anit 11a; Nedarim 10a)

Clearly R. Eliezer Hakappar is engaging in a polemic against asceticism in Jewish life. We do not know which groups he may have had in mind. Many of the early Christians were ascetics. So in some respects were the members of the Qumran sect known to us through the Dead Sea Scrolls. Holy people in many faiths have chosen, in pursuit of spiritual purity, to withdraw from the world, its pleasures and temptations, fasting, afflicting themselves and living in caves, retreats or monasteries.

In the Middle Ages there were Jews who adopted self-denying practices – among them the Hassidei Ashkenaz, the Pietists of Northern Europe, as well as many Jews in Islamic lands. It is hard not to see in these patterns of behaviour at least some influence from the non-Jewish environment. The Hassidei Ashkenaz who flourished during the time of the Crusades lived among deeply pious, self-mortifying Christians. Their southern counterparts would have been familiar with

Sufism, the mystical movement in Islam.

The ambivalence of Jews toward the life of self-denial may therefore lie in the suspicion that it entered Judaism from the outside. There were movements in the first centuries of the common Era in both the West (Greece) and the East (Iran) that saw the physical world as a place of corruption and strife. They were dualists, holding that the true God was not the creator of the universe and could not be reached within the universe. The physical world was the work of a lesser, and evil, deity. Hence holiness means withdrawing from the physical world, its pleasures, appetites and desires. The two best known movements to hold this view were Gnosticism in the West and Manichaeism in the East. So at least some of the negative evaluation of the nazirite may have been driven by a desire to discourage Jews from imitating non-Jewish tendencies in Christianity and Islam.

What is remarkable however is the position of Maimonides, who holds both views, positive and negative. In *Hilkhot Deot*, the Laws of Ethical Character, Maimonides adopts the negative position of R. Eliezer Hakappar: "A person may say: 'Desire, honour and the like are bad paths to follow and remove a person from the world, therefore I will completely separate myself from them and go to the other extreme.' As a result, he does not eat meat or drink wine or take a wife or live in a decent house or wear decent clothing . . . This too is bad, and it is forbidden to choose this way." (*Hilkhot Deot* 3:1)

Yet in the same book, the *Mishneh Torah*, he writes: "Whoever vows to God [to become a nazirite] by way of holiness, does well and is

praiseworthy . . . Indeed Scripture considers him the equal of a prophet" (Hilkhot Nezirut 10: 14). How does any writer come to adopt so self-contradictory a position – let alone one as resolutely logical as Maimonides?

The answer is profound. According to Maimonides, there is not one model of the virtuous life, but two. He calls them respectively the way of the saint (Hassid) and the sage (Hakham).

The saint is a person of extremes. Maimonides defines hessed as extreme behaviour -- good behaviour, to be sure, but conduct in excess of what strict justice requires (Guide for the Perplexed III, 52). So, for example, "If one avoids haughtiness to the utmost extent and becomes exceedingly humble, he is termed a saint (hassid)" (Hilkhot Deot 1: 5).

The sage is a completely different kind of person. He follows the "golden mean", the "middle way" of moderation and balance. He or she avoids the extremes of cowardice on the one hand, recklessness on the other, and thus acquires the virtue of courage. The sage avoids both miserliness and renunciation of wealth, hoarding or giving away all he has, and thus becomes neither stingy nor foolhardy but generous. He or she knows the twin dangers of too much and too little – excess and deficiency. The sage weighs conflicting pressures and avoids extremes.

These are not just two types of person but two ways of understanding the moral life itself. Is the aim of morality to achieve personal perfection? Or is it to create gracious relationships and a decent, just, compassionate society? The intuitive answer of

most people would be to say: both. That is what makes Maimonides so acute a thinker. He realises that you can't have both – that they are in fact different enterprises.

A saint may give all his money away to the poor. But what about the members of the saint's own family? A saint may refuse to fight in battle. But what about the saint's fellow citizens? A saint may forgive all crimes committed against him. But what about the rule of law, and justice? Saints are supremely virtuous people, considered as individuals. But you cannot build a society out of saints alone. Indeed, saints are not really interested in society. They have chosen a different, lonely, self-segregating path. They are seeking personal salvation rather than collective redemption.

It is this deep insight that led Maimonides to his seemingly contradictory evaluations of the nazirite. The nazirite has chosen, at least for a period, to adopt a life of extreme self-denial. He is a saint, a hassid. He has adopted the path of personal perfection. That is noble, commendable, a high ideal.

But it is not the way of the sage – and you need sages if you seek to perfect society. The reason the sage is not an extremist is because he or she realises that there are other people at stake. There are the members of one's own family; the others within one's own community; there are colleagues at work; there is a country to defend and a nation to help build. The sage knows it is dangerous, even morally self-indulgent, to leave all these commitments behind to pursue a life of solitary virtue. For we are called on by God to live in the world, not

escape from it; in society not seclusion; to strive to create a balance among the conflicting pressures on us, not to focus on some while neglecting the others. Hence, while from a personal perspective the nazirite is a saint, from a societal perspective he is, at least figuratively, a "sinner" who has to bring an atonement offering.

Judaism makes room for individuals to escape from the temptations of the world. The supreme example is the nazirite. But this is an exception, not the norm. To be a chakham, a sage, is to have the courage to engage with the world, despite all the spiritual risks, and to help bring a fragment of the Divine presence into the shared spaces of our collective life.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"Any man, if his wife turns aside and commits a trespass against him". (5:12)

The extremely grave sin of adultery, for which the death penalty is inflicted, is condemned and stigmatized by the accusation of a trespass of disloyalty to her husband. Indeed, Hashem inflicts this penalty, but the severity of the crime is because of disloyalty. Even the adulterer deserves death not only for causing the woman to commit this deed of disloyalty, but also for his own crime of disloyalty to his fellowman's rights.

"And commits a trespass against him". (5:12)

Literally, "was disloyal to him". Here is enunciated the chief foundation of Marriage.

"Romantic Love" is an illusion which is immediately dispelled by the realities of daily existence. But the ideal of loyalty of husband and wife toward each other is an

undying attitude which transcends all the tests of life.

In ancient times, when a man took another wife as the Torah permits, this would not have been a disloyalty to his wife. But even the husband must be more loyal to his wife than anyone else. He must side with her against any faultfinder and must be concerned for her welfare. This mutual loyalty is the test whereby a great part of men's lives is judged as successful or otherwise.

"It is not good for Man to be alone" (Bereshheet 2:18). This means that the "Good" of life is achieved most perfectly when men and women pass the test of loyalty to their mates. Adultery is possible only when a woman has failed her duty of loyalty, and the severe penalty of death is a demonstration of the great importance of the loyalty toward the spouse.

The Creator demands this loyalty.

Quoted from "Journey Into Greatness" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

1) Q. The Levi'im were responsible for the transport of the Mishkan. What other service performed by them is mentioned in this parasha?

A. The Levi'im would sing songs and play music with cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices. When I was studying in Israel in 1993, I met a British student who was studying in a Yeshiva in Israel. He was taking lessons on how to play the harp because he was a Levi and wanted to be prepared to fulfill his tasks in the Bet Hamikdash when the Mashiach arrives.

2) Q. Who was sent out of each of the camps?

A. There were three camps. The Camp of the Shechina was in

the center, surrounded by the Camp of Levi which was surrounded by the Camp of Yisrael (see summary above). 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 Tameh because of contact with the dead had to leave only the Camp of the Shechina.

3) Q. In the parasha, it mentions the law for a person with no heirs. What member of the Jewish People has no heir?

A. It is very rare for anyone to not even have a distant relative. A convert, breaks off all ties with his former family when he converts. The only likely situation of a person with no relatives would be a convert who dies without leaving a Jewish descendent.

4) Q. When a Sotah who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion (see summary above). What happens to the man she sinned with?

A. The Gemara understands the repetitive nature of the verse describing her death, as referring also to the death of the man she sinned with. He dies in the same manner as she (wherever he may be at the time).

5) Q. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem bless you and guard you"?

A. One explanation given is that: "May Hashem bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery so that you will not lose what you were blessed with.

6) Q. What was the role of the Nesi'im (Princes of the Tribes) in Egypt?

A. The Midrash states that in Egypt, there were Egyptian Taskmasters who used to hold the tribal leaders responsible if the Jews did not build enough each day. They wanted the tribal leaders to beat the Jews and force them to finish their work.

They refused to beat their brethren and took the beatings instead.

7) Q. In what order did the Nesi'im offer their gifts during the dedication of the Mishkan?

A. According to the order in which their tribes traveled in the desert. Another opinion is that it should have been in birth order, Reuven being first since he was the oldest. Instead, Yehudah went first because his tribe was the tribe of kings (King David came from Yehudah), then came Yissachar because that tribe had the greatest Torah scholars, then Zevulun because they financed the Torah study of Yissachar. Only afterwards was the tribe of Reuven allowed to present their offering.

8) Q. From where did the voice of Hashem emanate?

A. The Voice issued from Heaven to the place between the Cherubim and from there it filled the Ohel Moed. Of course it must be understood that God himself does not have a voice. He does not have vocal chords and can't cause sound vibrations as He has no physicality. Therefore, the "voice" was likely a created sound for this purpose.

9) Q. Why was the honorable duty of taking care of the Aron (Ark) given to Kehat son of Levi instead of to Levi's firstborn, Gershon?

A. The Kli Yakar explains that if the duty of taking care of the Aron -- the prime representation of Torah -- was given to Levi's firstborn, people might think that Torah is received as an 'inheritance,' as is the Crown of Royalty and the Crown of Kehuna. The Crown of Torah, however, is available to be the property of anyone who toils in learning the Torah and rightly deserves it. As Maimonides teaches us, anyone no matter what his or her ancestry or class in life has the ability to become as knowledgeable in Torah as Moshe Rabenu.