

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

Shavuot and Parshat Naso
May 14 – 18, 2013 Sivan 6-9

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SHAVUOT SCHEDULE

Tuesday, May 14th Erev Shavuot

Candle Lighting 7:46 pm / Mincha 7:00pm

**Tikkun Leil Shavuot 11:45 pm - All night learning with Rabbi David Bibi and Rabbi Aharon Seigel
Rabbi Yosef Colish and Rabbi Michael Wagner - Please let us know if you will be learning with us**

**Night time snacks and refreshments provided by the sisterhood
followed by Vatikin Minyan at 4:45 am Sunrise and Amidah at 5:38 and Delux Breakfast**

**Wednesday, May 15th First Day of Shavuot Shacharit 9:00 am - We need a commitment of ten guys for regular
minyan Tefilot and Torah Reading by Na'im Zemirov Yisrael – Uri Lemberger
All are invited to Phyllis Wagner for Kiddush and desserts.**

Mincha 7:30 pm Followed by Azharot and Megilat Ruth Part 1 Candles after 8:52 pm

Thursday, May 16th Second Day Shavuot Shacharit 9:00 am - Yizkor 11:00 am

Beautiful Dairy Lunch Sponsored by the Sisterhood

Mincha 7:30 pm Followed by Azharot and Megilat Ruth Part 2 And a Class

Arbit at 8:35 Havdalah – Holiday Ends 8:47 pm

NASO

Friday Night May 17th: Candles: 7:48 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Mincha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shacharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:24 AM

**11:00 - 12:00 Orah's will be here with our Shabbat Morning Kids Program upstairs in the Rabbi's study.
Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . . And Leah Colish will be babysitting down in the playground**

**Kiddush sponsored by Dr and Mrs Baruch Kahn in memory of his father –
Shmuel Eliyahu Ben Dovid HaKohen**

**5:30 - Mincha Shabbat Afternoon Oneg with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Treats, Stories, Basketball, Hula-hoop,
Parsha Quiz, Tefillot, Raffles and Fun! Supervised play during Seudat Shelishit.**

5:30: Ladies Torah Class at the Lemberger's 1 East Olive.

Mincha: 7:00 PM –

Seudah Shelishi and a Class 7:40 – with Rav Aharon on Pirkey Avot

Evening Service (Arbith): 8:40 PM - Shabbat Ends: 8:48PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shacharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Daily 6:30 AM class – Honest Business Practices

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 7PM Monday night

LADIES: Wednesday Night 8PM with Esther Wein at various homes –

Financial Peace University – Tuesday at 8PM

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

This week's newsletter begins with my article on Shavuot, followed by a piece by Daniel Greenfield and continues with Diverei Torah on Parshat Naso for the upcoming Shabbat.

Shavuot -Weddings, Movies and Happily Ever After !

As the weather becomes warmer and the flowers bloom, we find ourselves in the pre-summer wedding season of almost daily celebrations. Twenty eight years ago on mother's day, my wife Chantelle and I were married. And B'H in a few weeks my daughter Aryana will wed Steven, her fiancé.

Reading through the marriage section of the papers, one also reads about renewal of vow ceremonies and celebrations. I've never been to a ceremony where a couple renewed vows, nor have I heard from any friends who have ever been part of such a service. For most of us, renewing of vows is a scene limited to the movies. Typically its proceeded by a first wedding with some element of disaster, or the couple has gone through rocky times and the apex is when they reaffirm their commitment to one another.

Enemies of the Jewish people rarely tire of pointing out that the American movie industry has largely been in the hands of Jews. This is of course true. Although it was Edison who invented the medium, Jews took it to the next level. Adolf Zukor founded Paramount Studios. Wilhelm Fuchs, known as William Fox, founded 20th Century Fox. Louis B. Mayer and Samuel Goldwyn (Schmuel Goldficz), founded Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Carl Laemmle, founded Universal. Harry Cohn was behind Columbia Pictures.

Still today I am always intrigued with the names of the writers the producers and the power players in the movie industry. While Jews account for less than 2% of the current US population, more often than not,

it seems that the story on screen was written by someone Jewish.

The successful formula, of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl, created by those early pioneers is still used successfully today. And the renewal of vows works perfectly in that recipe.

Where did they come up with this formula?

This week we celebrate the holiday of Shavuot. And like many of you out there, our offices, our showrooms and our factories will be closed. And this year, it comes during market week which begins Tuesday afternoon and extends through Thursday at the Decoration and Design Building. (For those who don't know, I don't earn my living as a Rabbi. Although the offers I've been getting from some congregations lately which include pay and benefits are certainly ego boosting – for the moment I remain a man of the pulpit with no salary of benefits (at least not in this world). Manufacturing furniture pays the bills. Combining the two fields of carpentry and the rabbinate presented me with an interesting story. In 1995 in anticipation of the visit to New York of Pope John Paul II, we were asked to make him a chair to use here. At the time we were working on a throne to be used by the metropolitan opera's rendition of Pique Dame. The Pope's representatives saw plans for this chair originally designed for the Czar and asked us to make another in pure gold leaf. We asked, "Why with more than enough Italian manufacturers making high quality pieces they would come to us, Orthodox Jews." They replied that an Orthodox Jewish carpenter is the basis of their religion. – I hope you at least smiled - We made the chair and after he left New York, it was returned to us with appreciation and we still have it on our showroom floor with lots of papal stories.)

Closing up in the middle of the week, especially market week presents its challenges. Especially the questions of, "why are you closing?"

Try to explain Shavuot. Set aside the non-Jews for a moment. Most Jews have no idea what it is. And isn't it ironic? Shavuot commemorates the single most important event in Jewish history. Maimonides calls the revelation on Sinai and the giving of the Torah the basis of all Jewish belief.

Picture the scene – no not the one from the Cecil B DeMille movie. With heavenly voices, the Shofar sounding, lightning and thunder, G-d revealed Himself to the Jewish people with the word Anochi – I am G-d, your G-d who took you out of Egypt. No

other religion records or even makes claim of a Divine revelation to an entire nation where they could tell their children and their children could tell their grandchildren until today.

G-d rescued us from Egypt. He fed us, clothed us, sheltered us and fought for us. Then he took us to the wedding canopy which was Mount Sinai and betrothed us. The verse in Shir Hashirim (3:11) says, "On the day of His marriage." The rabbis teach us that this refers to Matan Torah – the day of the giving of the Torah. Shavuot, according to the Ohr Hachaim, is named after seven "weeks," (as weeks is the literal translation) but is also named after two "oaths." (A shevuah is an oath). One is Hashem's oath to us and the other is our oath to G-d.

But what happens 40 days later? We stray with the Golden Calf as an adulteress cheating on her husband. We are guilty of breaking our oath. G-d wants a divorce.

But Moses steps in and brings peace between husband and wife, between G-d and the children of Israel. We build a family home, the Mishkan and G-d tells Moses, VeShachanti BeTocham, I will dwell within them.

Boy saves girl and marries her.
Boy loses girl who strays.
Boy and Girl are reunited.

Where did Hollywood find its story? It's the story of the Jewish people. It's Biblical and it's in our Jewish DNA.

And it plays over and over again, in generation after generation.

Even when we search for spirituality, we rarely search in our own back yard. Too many feel that Judaism lacks spirituality. I can't tell you how many people leave a class and say, "wow, I didn't know that this was Judaism".

Too often they run to Tibet to learn from the Buddhists or India to learn from the Hindus. They search out Shamans in Mongolia or the Machi in Chili. They believe there is a wizard in Oz and he has all the answers.

Let me close with a story my Rabbi, Asher Abittan, z'sl would tell.

There was once a poor man who lived in Prague. One night he dreamt that he should journey to

Vienna. There, at the base of a bridge leading to the King's palace, he would find a buried treasure.

Night after night the dream recurred until, leaving his family behind, he traveled to Vienna to claim his fortune. The bridge, however, was heavily guarded. The watchful eyes of the King's soldiers gave him little opportunity to retrieve the treasure. Every day the poor man spent hours pacing back and forth across the bridge waiting for his chance.

After two weeks' time one of the guards grabbed him by the lapels of his coat and asked him, "What are you plotting? Why do you keep returning to this place day after day?" Frustrated and anxious, he blurted out the story of his dream. When he finished, the soldier broke into uncontrollable laughter.

The poor man looked on in astonishment, not knowing what to make of the soldier's attitude. Finally, the King's guard caught his breath. He stopped laughing long enough to say, "What a foolish man you are, believing in dreams. Why, if I let my life be guided by visions, I would be well on my way to the city of Prague. For just last night I dreamt that a poor man in that city has, buried in his cellar, a treasure which awaits discovery."

The poor man returned home. He dug in his cellar and found the fortune.

We forget Dorothy's words while tapping her shoes. "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

It's sad that we often need to search far away when the treasure is simply at home and right under our feet.

My father in law Jerry Werman A'H, often lamented the fact that few people ever were happy with what they had and appreciated what they were given.

Most of us are guilty at some point in our lives. We were given 49 days to trace our way back; to grow and prepare ourselves for the big day. We even stay up all night in anticipation of the ceremony.

Shavuot is the anniversary of that first wedding. But more than simply an anniversary, Shavuot offers us the chance to renew our vows. Whatever got messed up at the first wedding, however disastrous the honeymoon and no matter our wanderings in foreign places. Shavuot is the time to come home. Shavuot is the time to return to the chuppah again. We have an opportunity to do it all over again. And to finally live happily ever after.

It's what the Mashiach is waiting for.

Happy Holiday!
Tizku LeShanim Rabot

David Bibi

96% of the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists are Muslim
The following is an opinion piece by Daniel Greenfield

And the other four percent is a single animal rights activist. I blame Islamophobia for this shameless terrorist profiling. Also reality.

Interesting that with all of the obfuscation about domestic terrorism and Christian terrorism and Jewish and Lutheran and Episcopalian and Amish terrorism, 30 of 31 on the list are Muslim.

It's easy to stand in front of a malleable press corps and claim that terrorism is not the exclusive domain of Islam, but when it comes to actual facts, they haven't arrived at manufacturing charges....yet.

Much as the usual suspects may prattle on about the tiny minority of extremists, that tiny minority is a very specific tiny minority. It is not a tiny minority of any of the religions that Muslims complain about. Buddhists from Myanmar aren't bombing the Boston Marathon. Neither are Nigerian Christians or Israeli Jews.

There is one religion with a major terrorism problem. It's the tiny minority of extremists that founded Islam, drove out all other religions, and spread their system of belief around the world by the sword. The following is a compilation of these treacherous men, who are all considered armed and dangerous:

IBRAHIM SALIH MOHAMMED AL-YACOUB

Place of Birth: Tarut, Saudi Arabia
Wanted for: Ibrahim Salih Mohammed Al-Yacoub has been indicted in the Eastern District of Virginia for the June 25, 1996, bombing of the Khobar Towers military housing complex in Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

FAOUZI MOHAMAD AYOUB

Place of Birth: Beirut, Lebanon
Wanted for: Faouzi Mohamad Ayoub was indicted by the United States Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Michigan, on August 5, 2009. Ayoub willfully and knowingly used and attempted to use a false, forged, or counterfeit United States Passport in order to gain

admittance into the state of Israel for the purpose of conducting a bombing on behalf of the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Hizballah.

OMAR SHAFIK HAMMAMI

Place of Birth: Alabama
Wanted for: Omar Shafik Hammami was indicted originally in the Southern District of Alabama in 2007 on terrorism violations. A superseding indictment was returned against Hammami in 2009 on terrorism violations for leaving the United States to join the Somalia-based terrorist organization, al-Shabaab. He is alleged to have provided material support to terrorists as early as 2006. On December 13, 2007, a federal warrant was issued by the United States District Court, Southern District of Alabama, for Hammami's arrest.

ADAM YAHIYE GADAHN

Place of Birth: United States
Wanted for: Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn was indicted in the Central District of California for treason and material support to Al Qaeda. The charges are related to Gadahn's alleged involvement in a number of terrorist activities, including providing aid and comfort to Al Qaeda and services for Al Qaeda.

ABDUL RAHMAN YASIN

Place of Birth: Bloomington, Indiana
Wanted for: Abdul Rahman Yasin is wanted for his alleged participation in the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center, New York City, on February 26, 1993, which resulted in six deaths, the wounding of numerous individuals, and the significant destruction of property and commerce.

JABER A. ELBANEH

Place of Birth: Yemen
Wanted for: Jaber A. Elbaneh is wanted in connection with a federal criminal complaint unsealed on May 21, 2003, in the Western District of New York, Buffalo, New York. He is charged with providing material support to a terrorist organization and conspiring to provide material support, specifically to Al-Qaeda. Elbaneh is believed to have fled the United States and is still thought to be outside the country.

MUHAMMAD AHMED AL-MUNAWAR

Place of Birth: Kuwait
Wanted for: Muhammad Ahmed Al-Munawar was indicted in the District of Columbia for his alleged role in the September 5, 1986, hijacking of Pan American World Airways Flight 73 during a stop in Karachi, Pakistan. The attack resulted in the murder of 20 passengers and crew, including two American citizens, and the attempted murder of 379

passengers and crew, including 89 American citizens.

JAMEL AHMED MOHAMMED ALI AL-BADAWI
Place of Birth: Al-Shargian, Makiris, Yemen
Wanted for: Jamel Ahmed Mohammed Ali Al-Badawi is wanted in connection with the October 12, 2000, bombing of the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen. This attack resulted in the deaths of 17 American sailors. Al-Badawi was being held by Yemeni authorities in connection with the attack when he escaped from prison in April of 2003. Al-Badawi was recaptured in March of 2004, but again escaped Yemeni custody on February 3, 2006.

ADNAN G. EL SHUKRIJUMAH
Place of Birth: Saudi Arabia
Wanted for: Adnan G. El Shukrijumah was indicted in the Eastern District of New York in July of 2010 for his alleged role in a terrorist plot to attack targets in the United States and the United Kingdom. The charges reveal that the plot against New York City's subway system, uncovered in September of 2009, was directed by senior Al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, and was also directly related to a scheme by Al-Qaeda plotters in Pakistan to use Western operatives to attack a target in the United States. El Shukrijumah is thought to have served as one of the leaders of Al-Qaeda's external operations program.

AYMAN AL-ZAWAHIRI
Place of Birth: Egypt
Wanted for: Ayman Al-Zawahiri has been indicted for his alleged role in the August 7, 1998, bombings of the United States Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya.

ALI SAED BIN ALI EL-HOORIE
Place of Birth: El Dibabiya, Saudi Arabia
Wanted for: Ali Saed Bin Ali El-Hoorie has been indicted in the Eastern District of Virginia for the June 25, 1996, bombing of the Khobar Towers military housing complex in Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

ABDULLAH AHMED ABDULLAH
Place of Birth: Egypt
Wanted for: Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah has been indicted for his alleged involvement in the August 7, 1998, bombings of the United States Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya.

RAMADAN ABDULLAH MOHAMMAD SHALLAH
Place of Birth: Sajaya, Gaza Strip
Wanted for: Ramadan Abdullah Mohammad Shallah is wanted for conspiracy to conduct the affairs of the designated international terrorist organization known

as the "Palestinian Islamic Jihad" (PIJ) through a pattern of racketeering activities such as bombings, murders, extortions, and money laundering. Shallah was one of the original founding members of the PIJ and is presently the Secretary-General and leader of the organization, which has its headquarters located in Damascus, Syria. He was listed as a "Specially Designated Terrorist" under United States law on November 27, 1995. Shallah was indicted in a 53 count indictment in the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, Tampa, Florida.

HASAN IZZ-AL-DIN
Place of Birth: Lebanon
Wanted for: Hasan Izz-Al-Din was indicted for his role in planning and participating in the June 14, 1985, hijacking of a commercial airliner which resulted in the assault on various passengers and crew members, and the murder of one United States citizen.

MOHAMMED ALI HAMADEI
Place of Birth: Lebanon
Wanted for: Mohammed Ali Hamadei was indicted for his role and participation in the June 14, 1985, hijacking of a commercial airliner, which resulted in the assault on various passengers and crew members, and the murder of one United States citizen.

ABDELKARIM HUSSEIN MOHAMED AL-NASSER
Place of Birth: Al Ihsa, Saudi Arabia
Wanted for: Abdelkarim Hussein Mohamed Al-Nasser has been indicted in the Eastern District of Virginia for the June 25, 1996, bombing of the Khobar Towers military housing complex in Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

AHMAD IBRAHIM AL-MUGHASSIL
Place of Birth: Qatif - Bab Al Shamal, Saudi Arabia
Wanted for: Ahmad Ibrahim Al-Mughassil has been indicted in the Eastern District of Virginia for the June 25, 1996, bombing of the Khobar Towers military housing complex in Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

SAIF AL-ADEL
Place of Birth: Egypt
Wanted for: Saif Al-Adel is wanted in connection with the August 7, 1998, bombings of the United States Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya.

ANAS AL-LIBY
Place of Birth: Tripoli, Libya
Wanted for: Anas Al-Liby was indicted in the Southern District of New York, for his alleged

involvement in the bombings of the United States Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, on August 7, 1998.

WADOUD MUHAMMAD HAFIZ AL-TURKI

Place of Birth: Baghdad, Iraq

Wanted for: Wadoud Muhammad Hafiz Al-Turki was indicted in the District of Columbia for his alleged role in the September 5, 1986, hijacking of Pan American World Airways Flight 73 during a stop in Karachi, Pakistan. The attack resulted in the murder of 20 passengers and crew, including two American citizens, and the attempted murder of 379 passengers and crew, including 89 American citizens.

MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH KHALIL HUSSAIN AR-RAHAYYAL

Place of Birth: Lebanon

Wanted for: Muhammad Abdullah Khalil Hussain Ar-Rahayyal was indicted in the District of Columbia for his alleged role in the September 5, 1986, hijacking of Pan American World Airways Flight 73 during a stop in Karachi, Pakistan. The attack resulted in the murder of 20 passengers and crew, including two American citizens, and the attempted murder of 379 passengers and crew, including 89 American citizens.

JAMAL SAEED ABDUL RAHIM

Place of Birth: Lebanon

Wanted for: Jamal Saeed Abdul Rahim was indicted in the District of Columbia for his alleged role in the September 5, 1986, hijacking of Pan American World Airways Flight 73 during a stop in Karachi, Pakistan. The attack resulted in the murder of 20 passengers and crew, including two American citizens, and the attempted murder of 379 passengers and crew, including 89 American citizens.

ABD AL AZIZ AWDA

Place of Birth: Jabalyah, Gaza Strip

Wanted for: Abd Al Aziz Awda is wanted for conspiracy to conduct the affairs of the designated international terrorist organization known as the "Palestinian Islamic Jihad" (PIJ) through a pattern of racketeering activities such as bombings, murders, extortions, and money laundering. Awda was one of the original founders and the spiritual leader of the PIJ and is presently still involved in the organization, which has its headquarters located in Damascus, Syria. He was listed as a "Specially Designated Terrorist" under United States law on January 23, 1995. Awda was indicted in a 53 count indictment in the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, Tampa, Florida.

HAKIMULLAH MEHSUD

Place of Birth: Kotkai Region, South Waziristan, Pakistan

Wanted for: Hakimullah Mehsud is wanted for his alleged involvement in the December 30, 2009 bombing of a United States military base located near the Afghan town of Khost, that lies along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The blast from the explosion killed seven United States citizens and injured six other United States citizens. The explosion occurred after a suicide bomber entered the military base and detonated a device that was hidden under his clothing.

On August 20, 2010, Mehsud was charged federally with conspiracy to murder a United States National while outside the United States and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction against a National of the United States while outside the United States. That same day, a federal warrant was issued by the United States District Court, District of Columbia, for Mehsud's arrest.

On September 1, 2010, the United States added Hakimullah Mehsud to its list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists and the TTP to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

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 Pilshtim. 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.

Shimshon is among the most difficult figures in Jewish history to understand. For a comprehensive presentation and explanation see, "Samson's Struggle", by Rabbi Gershon Weiss.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"They were the princes (Nasi) of the tribes; they were those who stand over the counted." (Bemidbar 7:2)

The perashah goes to tremendous lengths to describe the gifts of the Nasi of each tribe. Who were these people? Rashi explains: they were guards over the tribes in Egypt and were beaten on account of the tribes, as it says, "And the guards of the Children of Israel were beaten."

Rabbi Tzvi Feldman zt"l, the Mashgiah of the Mirrer Yeshivah in Brooklyn, elaborates on this important subject. Firstly we learn from this who are truly worthy to be leaders of Israel. Those that are ready to give of themselves completely to the people are the greatest candidates. Those who seek nothing for themselves. This is a refreshing idea for us today, we who live in a world where daily headlines are taken up by revealing another corrupt

official. However, not only do they merit to the role of leadership, the Pirkei Abot (6:6) says that the ability to bear the burden of your fellow Jew (noseh be'ol habero) is a prerequisite to serious Torah study. Therefore this ability allows them to attain spiritual greatness. But, the most important aspect of this trait was to serve as a model to the people, as to whom we should look up to as our leaders, one who is so giving without limit.

This concept of the role model for us or for our children is of great importance. Many times we find that we are hungry for Torah information (which is a good thing). But today, many times we are satisfied with a computerized printout of info from our smart phone or other electronic means. We have to know that although we do agree with the proper use of electronic spreading of Torah knowledge (this bulletin is available on email) it is no substitute for a human mentor and Rabbi. Each Jew must have a Rav that he can emulate and watch, to see how he conducts himself. There is no electronic substitute for this. May Hashem help each of us to attach to a man that is described in the Torah as "Im domeh haRav lemal'ach Hashem yebakshu Torah mipiv – If the Rav is like an angel of Hashem, seek out Torah from him." Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Parashat Naso: A Warning Even To Us
The Torah in Parashat Naso discusses the law of Sota, a woman suspected of infidelity. This is a situation where a husband warns his wife in the presence of witnesses not to go into seclusion with a certain man, with whom the husband suspects she is having an inappropriate relationship. If witnesses later testify that she had been secluded with the man in question, then the husband brings her to the Bet Hamikdash where is she given special water to drink. If she is guilty of infidelity, then the water kills her. Of course, even if she is innocent of this offense and does not die as a result of drinking the water, she is not entirely innocent. She has already committed a certain form of infidelity by arousing her husband's suspicion and going into seclusion with another man. It goes without saying that this is strictly forbidden and wholly inappropriate, not to mention a grave betrayal of her husband's trust.

What kind of a woman is this, who engaged in some sort of inappropriate relationship with another man?

Intuitively, we might assume that we deal here with a very immodest and flirtatious woman, probably a woman without much religious background and who was not necessarily committed to the Torah way of life to begin with. But the Torah's description of the Sota ceremony makes it clear that this is not the case. The Torah instructs that when the woman arrives at the Bet Hamikdash, the Kohen uncovers her hair. The clear implication is that she had her hair covered, as Halacha requires. In other words, this is an otherwise religious woman, somebody who generally observed Torah law, but somehow found herself involved in an inappropriate relationship with another man.

The Yeser Hara does not discriminate or play favorites. It lures and applies pressure to everyone, regardless of their religious background or current religious standing. We tend to think that because we're observant, we are free from certain spiritual dangers, that the Torah's warnings don't apply to us. The story of the Sota teaches us that this is very far from the truth. Even a woman wearing a kerchief covering every strand of hair is susceptible to the machinations of the Yeser Hara. Regardless of what kind of Kippa, hat or whatever else a man has on his hand, he is a target of the evil inclination that looks to ensnare all people. It might even be argued that religiously observant people must exercise even greater vigilance due to the natural tendency to assume that we are safe. Nobody has the luxury of resting on his or her laurels and assuming that he or she is safe from the clutches of the Yeser Hara.

The section of the Sota is followed by the laws of the Nazir, somebody who decides to take a vow to abstain from wine (in addition to other prohibitions). The Sages explain that the Torah juxtaposes these two sections because a person who sees what happens to a Sota should abstain from wine as a precaution to avoid improper behavior. We might have thought that to the contrary, somebody who witnesses the horrific scene of a Sota's death would be shaken to the core and naturally disinclined to such sins. In truth, however, the sight of the Sota, just seeing somebody who committed this grievous sin, desensitizes a person to the gravity of adultery. And thus one who sees a Sota, and whose sensitivity to the severity of sin has thus been compromised, needs to reinforce his defenses by abstaining from intoxicating beverages.

The message of the Nazir assumes particular importance in our times, when we live in a culture in which sin not only occurs, but is glorified. In today's entertainment industry, unrestrained conduct and adulterous relationships are not just tolerated, but

celebrated. Exposure to this culture has a dangerous desensitizing effect, dulling our instinctive revulsion to such behavior. Especially in our day and age, we, like the Nazir, must be on guard and set safeguards in place to neutralize this influence. It is not enough that we are religiously observant; this alone does not grant us immunity from the Yeser Hara. The message of the Sota is relevant even to us, and, perhaps, especially to us, cautioning us to resist the influences of our society in order to maintain the standards of purity and holiness that the Torah demands.

Rabbi Wein

The term that the Torah uses for counting the Levite family of Gershon is nasso – to raise and lift up. The word can also mean to carry and bear a burden. It can also mean to lead. When such words appear in the Torah with multiple, differing meanings – and Hebrew is replete with so many of them – the commentators remark that all of the possible meanings of that word are nuanced and meant to be part of the verse of the Torah itself.

I think this insight is especially pertinent regarding the word nasso as it appears in this week's parsha. The family of Gershon, as is the tribe of Levi generally, is quite small in number but nevertheless laden with great responsibilities. It can use its paucity in numbers as an excuse for shirking its responsibilities and for refusing to perform the holy tasks assigned to it. But since it is meant to assume a leadership role in Jewish society, it is bidden to rise to the occasion.

There is no question that this role of leadership will be burdensome and frustrating. Yet it is enjoined at the beginning of its public service to bear up under the yoke of the Jewish people and to serve as the leaders, role models and mentors of the generations of the Jewish people. The Levites are not to shirk their duties and role but rather are to proudly lift themselves up to a higher level of Torah dedication and service to all of Israel. All of this is implicit in the word nasso that introduces this week's parsha to our attention.

Rambam, in a famous statement from his Mishne Torah, states, in effect, that all human beings who enter this world can reach the spiritual status of being a Levite. One must devote one's self to the service of God and of man, practice compassion and goodness and be satisfied and not too over ambitious with one's physical lot in life, in order to aspire to such a status. The Levites were the bearers of the Torah both literally and figuratively. Rambam indicates that they avoided the petty foolishness in our daily lives

and instead concentrated on the holy and noble task to which God assigned them.

The tasks and goals of the Levites were clearly delineated for them by the Torah. And even in our time when the service of the Temple is not yet present within Jewish society, the uniqueness of the role of the Levites in our midst has been preserved. At the time of the Golden Calf, when all of Israel was threatened with physical destruction and spiritual annihilation, it was the tribe of Levi that redressed the situation.

In the difficult times and circumstances that surround us today we are also in need of potential Levites who will rise to the occasion and its challenges. One cannot alter one's genealogy but one's spiritual aspirations to become a Levite have no limits or restraints

Sir Jonathan Sacks
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This week's sedra begins with a continuation of the census begun in last week's – the act that gives the entire book its English name: the book of "Numbers." Two things, though, are puzzling. The first is the very act of numbering the people. Jewish tradition conveys two quite different, apparently contradictory, attitudes toward the taking of a census.

Rashi notes that this is not the first time the people had been counted. Their number ("about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children") had already been given as they prepared to leave Egypt (Ex. 12: 37). A more precise calculation had been made when the adult males each gave a half shekel toward the building of the sanctuary (yielding a total of 603,550; Ex. 38: 26). Now a third count was taking place. Why the repeated calculations? Rashi's answer is simple and moving:

Because they (the children of Israel) are dear to Him, God counts them often. He counted them when they were about to leave Egypt. He counted them after the Golden Calf to establish how many were left. And now that He was about to cause His presence to rest on them (with the inauguration of the sanctuary), He counted them again. (Rashi to Bamidbar 1:1)

For Rashi, the counting of the people was an act of Divine love. Yet this is not the impression we receive elsewhere. To the contrary, the Torah sees the taking of a census as profoundly dangerous:

Then God said to Moses, "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each must give to God a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. (Ex. 30: 11-12).

Centuries later, when King David counted the people, there was a moment of Divine anger, during which 70, 000 died. It seems hard to reconcile the idea of counting as an act of love with the fact that counting involves great risk.

The second source of perplexity is the phrase the Torah uses to describe the act of counting: *naso/se'u et rosh*, literally, "lift the head." There are many verbs available in classical Hebrew to indicate the act of counting: *limnot*, *lifkod*, *lispur*, *lachshov*. Why, in the books of Exodus and Numbers, does the Torah resort to the strange circumlocution, "lift the heads" of the Israelites?

To understand the revolution the Hebrew Bible brought to the world, we have first to enter imaginatively into the consequences for humanity of the birth of civilization. In the earliest hunter-gatherer societies, people lived together in small groups. There were, as yet, no cities, no states, no large concentrations of population. The Torah attributes the building of the first city to Cain (Gen. 4: 17). Cities emerged with the birth of agriculture – in the fertile alluvial plain in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates, and the well-irrigated Nile delta. Twice in the book of Bereishit the Torah sketches a portrait of urban culture: first, the Tower of Babel, second, the Egypt to which Joseph is brought as a slave. They are both highly critical accounts. In Babel, human life was cheap (when the Tower was being built, said the sages, if a person fell and died, no one noticed. If a brick fell, they wept). In Egypt, entire populations – among them, eventually, the children of Israel – could be pressed into service as a labour force to build pyramids, temples and monuments, many of which still stand today.

The birth of agriculture and the growth of towns had huge social implications. For the first time, surplus wealth was possible and could be stored in the form of money (initially, precious metals such as silver and gold). So too, as populations expanded and the division of labour became more elaborate, social stratification began. Inequality – deep, pervasive and systemic – became one of the universal features of the earliest societies. At the top was the king, emperor or Pharaoh, seen as no less than a god or child of the gods, who held a massive concentration of power. Below him (or her) were the various ranks of privilege: court circles, military chiefs,

administrators and priests. The mass of the people – poor, illiterate, expendable – was significant, whether as an army or a construction force, as a mass, by sheer weight of numbers. Hence the significance of censuses in the ancient world (and in this respect, little has changed from then to now). Size meant strength, military or economic. Population counts gave rulers information about the size of the army they could muster, or of the income they could raise by taxation.

The religion of Israel is a sustained protest against this view – military, political and economic – of the human situation. At this distance in time it is hard fully to appreciate the breathtaking novelty, the transformative potential, of the cluster of ideas generated by a single revelation – that the human person as such, man or woman, rich or poor, powerful or powerless, is the image of God and therefore of non-negotiable, unquantifiable value. We are each equally in the image of God, therefore we stand equal in the presence of God. Much of Torah, Jewish history and the development of Western civilization is about the slow translation of this idea into institutions, social structures and ethical codes.

It should now be clear why the taking of a census is fraught with spiritual risk. The numbering of a people is the most potent symbol of mankind-in-the-mass, of a society in which the individual is not valued in and for him- or herself but as part of a totality whose power lies in numbers. That is precisely what Israel is not. The God of Israel, who is the God of all mankind, sets His special love on a people whose strength has nothing to do with numbers, a people that never sets itself to become an empire, that is never commanded to wage holy war in order to convert populations, that was and remains tiny in both absolute terms and relative to the empires with which it was and is surrounded, standing as it does at the vulnerable crossroad between three continents.

Both questions with which we began are now answered. There is a difference between a human census and one commanded by God. David's was a human census. Israel's second king had laid the foundations of a nation. He had waged successful wars, united the tribes and established Jerusalem as his capital. Shortly after his death, Israel reached its zenith as a power in the Middle East. Under Solomon, through strategic alliances, it became a centre of trade and scholarship. The Temple was built. It must have seemed at the time as if, after many centuries of wandering and war, Israel had become a power to rival any other. It was a shortlived, cruelly-shattered illusion. Almost immediately after Solomon's reign, the kingdom split

in two, and from then on its this-worldly fate was sealed. A history of defeats, exiles and destructions began, which has no parallel in the annals of any other nation. The Hebrew Bible is not wrong in seeing the starting-point of this decline in the moment at which David acted like any other king and ordered a census of the people.

A Divine census is utterly different. It has nothing to do with strength-in-numbers. It has to do, instead, with conveying to every member of the nation that he or she counts; that every person, family, household is held precious by God; that distinctions between great and small, ruler and ruled, leader and led, are irrelevant; that we are each God's image and the object of His love. A Divine census is, as Rashi says, a gesture of endearment. That is why it cannot be described by the usual verbs of counting — *limnot*, *lifkod*, *lispur*, *lachshov*. Only the phrase *naso/se'u et rosh*, "lift the head", does justice to this kind of enumeration, in which those entrusted with the task are commanded to "lift the head" of those they count, making every individual stand tall in the knowledge that they are loved, cherished, held special by God, and not merely a number, a cipher, among the thousands and millions.

There is a wonderful verse in Psalm 147 which we say every morning in our prayers: "He counts the number of the stars and calls them each by name." A name is a marker of uniqueness. Collective nouns group things together; proper names distinguish them as individuals. Only what we value, do we name (One of the most chilling acts of dehumanisation in the extermination camps of Nazi Germany was that those who entered were never addressed by their names. Instead they were given, inscribed on their skin, a number). God gives even the stars their names, all the more so human beings – on whom He has set His image. God counts to signal to us that each of us counts, for what we are as individuals, not en masse. He "lifts our head" in the most profound way known to mankind, by assuring each of us of His special, enduring, unquantifiable love.

That is the nature of the census in the book of Numbers. As the Israelites prepared to become a society with the sanctuary — visible home of the Divine presence – at its centre, they had to be reminded that they were to become the pioneers of a new and revolutionary social order, whose most famous definition was given by the prophet Zechariah as the Israelites prepared to rebuild the ruined temple: "Not by might, nor by strength, but by

My spirit, says the Lord."

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**Why is the brocho of yotzeir hameoros longer than the brocho on the torah? In what way is the subject of light more important than torah?**

Derech ertz kodmoh la'torah, derech ertz means, first to be a mentch. If you didn't learn how to be a mentch then you're too raw and unfit for torah. In order to be a mentch you have to appreciate the bria. Breishis boroh elokim comes first, and all the experience of the great people who've utilized this information, that Hashem was the borei. Later when they already ingrained this into our people, we became more and more aware of the great truths of breishis, then we're ready for matan torah.

Therefore in order for us to be ready for the brocho on torah, that's the brocho before krias shema, you must appreciate the meoros. People who fall asleep while saying yotzeir ohr, when it comes to ahava raba then they wake up, it's a mistake. Of course you should wake up, it's a good thing to wake up, you should wake up earlier though. Yotzeir Hameoros, you have to recognize the Borei first, and you recognise the Borei through His bria.

Yoducha Hashem Kol Ma'asecha, Your works praise You, the world speaks of Hashem. Hashamayim mesaprim kvod kail, the world speaks of Hashem. Once you're aware of Hashem, now you're ready to accept His torah. Some people who come to study torah and don't have any emunah at all, it's a pity, of course it's better than nothing, but it's a great pity. Therefore yotzeir hameoros should be lengthy and concentrated on. The malachim say kedusha in yotzeir hameoros not in ahava raba. Why do they say kedushah? They are excited about the bria. So we should also be excited about the bria, in order that we should learn from the yotzeir, the greatness of the One who made everything, that's important for us. Without that you can't begin, and that's the hakdama to torah.

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