

TORAH WEEKLY

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09 June – 15 June, 2019
06 Sivan – 12 Sivan, 5779
Torah: Numbers 4:21 - 7:89
Haftorah: Judges 13:2-25
PARSHAT NASO

CALENDARS

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

SELF-MADE MAN? "He is a self-made man who worships his creator." Who said it? About whom? It doesn't really matter as long as we make sure the description doesn't fit us.

This week's parshah details the offerings of the princes (nessi'im) of the twelve tribes at the time the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary in the wilderness, was completed. Previously, towards the end of the Book of Exodus, we had read that Moses blessed the people when they finished their work. What blessing did he give them? Our sages relate that he blessed them: May it be G-d's will that the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, should come to rest upon the work of your hands. He also blessed them with the phrase that would become part of Psalm 90, May the pleasantness of my L-rd, our G-d, be upon us...May He establish for us the work of our hands.

Why pray now? Surely the time for prayer was before the sanctuary was built. Then it might have been needed to inspire the people to bring in their offerings and contributions, to execute the huge amount of work that was required to create this new sacred structure. But now the work is done, everything is in place. Why pray now?

The answer is that Moses understood that building G-d's sanctuary is not in our hands alone. Sure, we can erect a structure. That's the easy part. The question is: will G-d see fit to live there, to make it His home? For this, a special prayer was called for. We needed a blessing upon the work our hands.

How often people imagine that they do it themselves — all by themselves? How many boast that they are "self-made men"? So anyone who didn't have a rich father before him is a self-made man? Do you really believe that your success is all your own doing? Your hard work, your business acumen, your clever trading technique—these are the secrets of your success?

And where did all that wisdom and ability come from? The skills and talents we possess are G-d-given gifts we should acknowledge and be grateful for. And that's not humility. It's reality. You were born with that natural talent and flair. Give credit to your Creator.

A friend was once laid up with a bad back. What happened? He picked up a little bicycle for his 5-year old. A tiny nonsense but it left him flat on his back for weeks.

I remember some years ago catching some kind of "bug" and losing my voice for quite a while. There I was, the rabbi, the preacher, the speaker and the radio personality — the man of words whose entire profession is built around his ability to say the right thing for every occasion — and suddenly I'm rendered absolutely speechless. Overnight, I was made useless and unproductive — all by a tiny germ.

To get sick takes a minute, to get well can take weeks and months. We all need to remember our frailties and limitations. No matter how strong, clever or talented we may be, we are all subject to higher forces. Nobody can do it alone. There is no such thing as a self-made man.

And so Moses reminds us all that even when our work is done, we still need that blessing from Above. Even when we work hard, concoct the most intricate business schemes, or present the most wonderful proposals, ultimately our success needs a prayer. We need to recognize the hand of G-d in our lives and, hopefully, in our success. Let us do our work as best as we can and then let us not forget to ask Him to bless the work of our hands.

by Rabbi Yossy Goldman

JOURNEY TOWARD PEACE It's hard to be spiritual in a material world. Our possessions come to possess us; we can't put down our smartphones or that last piece of chocolate cake. We can spend years working to achieve success in a career, in a relationship or in any other worthy pursuit, and then throw it all away for a foolish, temporary temptation.

Our possessions possess us. So how do we achieve harmony in our lives? How do we get to a place where there is no conflict between our spiritual goals and our physical needs?

In the portion of Naso, the Torah teaches us how to move from spiritual folly to inner peace. It does so by describing three laws: 1) the "wayward woman"; 2) the nazirite; 3) the priestly blessing, which concludes with the blessing for peace.

First the Torah describes the law of the "wayward woman." The Hebrew word for "wayward" (sotah) is related to the word for

“foolishness” (shtut). The Talmud states, “A person does not commit a transgression unless the spirit of folly enters him.” Thus, the sotah personifies the person who acts against his or her better judgment as a result of great temptation. To discover how to overcome the state of the sotah, we look to the next portion, the portion of the nazirite, which when understood correctly is the secret to achieving the inner spiritual harmony described in the priestly blessing.

The nazirite—the man or woman who takes a vow to temporarily refrain from drinking wine, cutting hair and becoming ritually impure—is referred to as “holy.” Yet, paradoxically, the Torah teaches that at the conclusion of the nazirite period he or she must offer a sin offering. This implies that although the choice to become a nazirite was the right choice for that person at that specific time, and thus a holy choice, the nazirite way of life is not the preferred one. (See Talmud, Taanit 11a.).

In Torah’s ideal model of holiness, the human being engages with the physical world and imbues it with spirituality, creating peace between body and soul. But occasionally, in order to achieve this ideal state of holiness, a person may have to take the path of the nazirite. If one wants to ensure that he is in control, that the wine, chocolate cake or smartphone will indeed enhance his spiritual life, then sometimes he first has to disengage. He has to demonstrate that he can survive for a period of time without dependence on the specific material possession.

The human imbues the physical world with spirituality. After refraining from drinking wine for 30 days, the nazirite can return to the consumption of wine while still maintaining his holiness. Through undergoing the process of the nazirite, one can be holy while engaged in the world. He can use his possessions as tools to attain his spiritual goals, not detract from them. The Torah provides the roadmap to journey from sotah to nazirite to the priestly blessing—from folly to control to peace and harmony.

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

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IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, June 9, 2019 - 6 Sivan, 5779

Torah Given (1313 BCE). On the 6th Sivan of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), seven weeks after the Exodus, G-d revealed Himself on Mount Sinai. The entire people of Israel (600,000 heads of households and their families), as well as the souls of all future generations of Jews, heard G-d declare the first two of the Ten Commandments and witnessed G-d's communication of the other eight through Moses. Following the revelation, Moses ascended the mountain for 40 days, to receive the remainder of the Torah from G-d. At Sinai, G-d rescinded the "decree" and "divide" (gezeirah) that had been in force since the 2nd day of creation separating the spiritual and the physical into two hermetic worlds; from this point on, "the higher realms could descend into the lower realms, and the lower could ascend to the higher." Thus was born the "mitzvah" -- a physical deed that, by virtue of the fact that it is commanded by G-d, brings G-dliness into the physical world.

Passing of King David (837 BCE). David, a descendent of Judah the son of Jacob as well as of Ruth, a Moabite convert to Judaism, was anointed King of Israel by Samuel in 878 BCE. All future legitimate kings of Israel were David's descendents, as will be Moshiach (the messiah), who will "restore the kingdom of David to its glory of old." David fought many wars, defeating Israel's enemies and securing and expanding its borders. He conquered Jerusalem, purchased the Temple Mount from its Yebusite owner, and prepared the foundation for the Holy Temple (which was built by his son, King Solomon). David served as the head of the Sanhedrin and the foremost Torah authority of his generation; he is also the "sweet singer of Israel" who composed the Book of Psalms that for 28 centuries has embodied the joys, sorrows and yearnings of the Jewish people. King David passed away on the 6th of Sivan of the year 837 BCE, age 70.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019 - 9 Sivan, 5779

Passing of "Kaf Hachaim" (1939). Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer, better known as the Kaf Hachaim (the name of the monumental halachic work which he authored), was born in Baghdad in 1870. In his youth he studied Torah under the Sephardic greats of the times, such as the Ben Ish Chai. In the beginning of the 20th century Rabbi Yaakov Chaim emigrated to the Land of Israel, and settled in Jerusalem. There he became renowned as a great kabbalist as well as a recognized halachic authority. He authored an eight-volume book on Jewish law, with a special focus on Jewish law and customs from a mystical viewpoint. He passed away on the 9th of Sivan in Jerusalem and was buried on the Mount of Olives.

Shabbat, June 15, 2019 - 12 Sivan, 5779

Passing of R. Shaul Dovber Zislin (1964). R. Shaul DovBer Zislin was a student in Yeshivat Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch. He went on as to serve as the director and spiritual mentor of the yeshiva's division in Shchedrin, and later as rabbi in Berezin (Byerazino) and Orsha (all three are towns in present-day Belarus). In 1934 he emigrated to the Land of Israel, where he served as rabbi of the Meah Shearim neighborhood of Tel Aviv until his passing on 12 Sivan, 5724 (1964). R. Shaul DovBer was known as a clever individual with a noble character. He possessed a deep knowledge of Chassidut, and had the unique ability to clarify the most obscure concepts, which attracted many listeners to his lectures and farbrengens.