

Torah Weekly

May 31- June 6, 2020
9-14 Sivan, 5780
Torah: Naso:
Numbers 4:21 - 7:89
Haftarah: 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 Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

From Good To Great

The entertainment news is filled with stories of the troubled lives of young people who have coasted on natural talent, and whose careers are just a flash in the pan. And business news is filled with stories of recently disgraced tycoons who thought they could make it to the top by cutting ethical or legal corners on their way up. Where do we go wrong? We enjoy seeing our names up in lights, but don't appreciate the effort it takes to get there and stay there. The thought of basking in the adulation of an adoring crowd is exciting, but are we willing to put in the hard work that is required for genuine and lasting success? The difference between a great writer and an adequate wordsmith is the dedication one devotes to the craft, and the hours spent editing and revising before submitting the final draft. But it's easier and more comfortable to just skate by on natural talent and future promise. Near enough becomes good enough. We might know what we need to do to succeed, but we're not willing to make the sacrifices to do it properly. It's even somewhat comforting to admit that we didn't really try our absolute best, because then we tell ourselves that we can't be blamed if we don't achieve perfection. Why we sabotage our chances of long-term success by not working hard enough is a question for a psychologist or life-coach, but the necessity for hard work and preparation is evident from this week's Torah portion. The Torah describes the various roles and responsibilities that

the three families of Levites were assigned. There is a subtle but telling difference between the way the Torah describes the family of Merari and the families of Gershon and Kehat. Gershon and Kehat were tasked with carrying the holy vessels and the beautiful wall-hangings of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The instruction to count the members of these families reads, "Single out and elevate the sons of Kehat and Gershon." (Bamidbar 4:2, Naso 4:21.) Merari, who carried the walls and supports through the desert, is introduced with far less elevated language: "You should count the tribe of Merari." (Naso 4:29.) On the face of it, the contrast of these verses reads like an unfair value judgment: the A-List families with the fancy task of transporting holiness, gold vessels and brocaded wall hangings, were "singled out, elevated" and gifted with all the honour and glory, while poor old Merari, schlepping the heavy wooden beams and metal sockets, was almost ignored. However, in a 1988 speech, the Rebbe pointed out that this kind of relative anonymity can actually be the true path to success. There is place for the pomp and ceremony of Gershon and Kehat, while at other times we should model ourselves on Merari. On occasion we do need to reveal our accomplishments. There is a time for public achievement, a time to demonstrate our natural gifts and our accomplishments. However it is just as important to forego the gaud and glitter, to toil away in the background, and settle down to hard work and

humble obscurity. Of all the tribes, it was Merari who was transporting the real backbone of G-d's Temple: the foundation and walls that supported the Mishkan and assembled the structure that allowed holiness, glory and G-dliness to flourish in our midst. No one ever achieved greatness in public. It is impossible to achieve permanent success without adequate effort and appropriate preparation. We truly thrive in the long term only when we've put in the hard work in advance, growing and developing our ideas and skills before opening ourselves to the judgment of an audience. The true challenge of life is not performing when the crowd is in place and the lights are on, but working with dedication and purpose in the leadup, so that when showtime comes, you finally deserve your chance to shine. *By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum*

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*

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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**

Sunday, May 31, 2020 --- 8 Sivan, 2020

Rabbi Escapes Crusaders (1147)

Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir Tam, known as the "Rabbenu Tam," was one of Rashi's illustrious grandsons. During the Second Crusade, on the second day of the holiday of Shavuot, the Crusaders entered his hometown of Ramerupt, and pillaged and massacred many Jews. They broke into Rabbenu Tam's house, plundered all his wealth, and seriously wounded Rabbenu Tam. On the next day, the 8th of Sivan, Rabbenu Tam escaped Rameru and the clutches of the Crusaders. Two years later he completed his famous treatise on Jewish ritual and ethics, *Sefer Hayashar*.

Monday, June 1, 2020 --- 9 Sivan, 2020

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.

Wednesday, June 3, 2020 --- 11 Sivan, 2020

Rebbe's Parents Wed (1900)

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory's, parents, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1878-1944) and Rebbetzin Chana Yanovsky (1880-1964) were married on the 11th of Sivan, 1900. Their oldest son, Menachem Mendel, was born two years later, on the 11th of Nissan of 1902.

Passing of "Minchat Yitzchak" (1989)

Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss, known as the *Minchat Yitzchak* (the name of the responsa he authored), was born in Galicia in 1902. He headed of the court of Jewish law, the *Beit Din*, in Grosswardein, Romania before WWII, and after miraculously surviving the war he assumed the same position in Manchester, England. In the aftermath of the Holocaust he worked diligently on aiding the many women whose husbands disappeared, and presumably perished, during the war; finding halachic "loopholes" which allowed them to remarry according to Jewish law. He authored a nine-volume set of responsa. In this widely-used work, he addresses many modern-day halachic issues which resulted from the technological explosion, as well as many medical ethics issues. In 1979, he assumed the position of *Av Beit Din* (Head of Court) in the *Edah Hachareidit*, one of the most prominent rabbinical bodies in Israel. He served in this capacity for the remainder of his life. He passed away on the 11th of Sivan. An estimated 30,000 people attended his funeral.

Thursday, June 4, 2020 --- 12 Sivan, 2020

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*.

Friday, June 5, 2020 --- 13 Sivan, 5780

Moses Atop Mount Sinai (1313 BCE)

"Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain...for six days. On the seventh day G-d called to Moses from within the cloud... And Moses came within the cloud, and he went up to the top of the mountain, and Moses was upon the mountain forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 24:15-18). On the morrow of the giving of the Ten Commandments (see Jewish History for the 6th of Sivan), Moses ascended Mount Sinai in order to receive from G-d the remainder of the Torah -- the remaining commandments and the Oral Law. After being "cleansed" by the cloud for six days, he was ushered into the presence of G-d on the 13th of Sivan.