

# Torah Weekly

**PARSHAT NASO**  
24 – 30 May, 2026  
8 – 14 Sivan, 5786  
Torah Reading:  
Naso: Numbers 4:21 – 7:89  
Haftarah: Judges 13:2-25

**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).

## NAZIRITES AND NUNNERIES

The mightiest man in the Bible was, of course, Samson. He took on the most savage of beasts and leveled a stadium with his bare hands. In the end, Samson was undone by a haircut—Delilah cut his hair and he lost his strength. Why should such an innocuous event have sapped his strength? The answer is that Samson was a nazirite. And as we read in this week's Torah portion, the sacred vow of the nazirite precludes him from cutting his hair, coming into contact with the dead, and drinking wine.

At the end of a person's nazirite period, there were certain atonement offerings he needed to bring to the Temple. The Talmud asks: why should a nazirite, who essentially has taken upon himself voluntary prohibitions beyond the letter of the law, be required to seek atonement? What sin did he commit? One Talmudic opinion suggests that the fact that he denied himself the pleasure of drinking wine is considered sinful.

Now the question is: why is it wrong to deny oneself anything? Just because the Creator allows us to enjoy the fruit of the vine, is it wrong to decline? Will I really be held accountable for every product that bears a kosher certification which I choose to do without? Just because a popular ice cream was recently approved by the kashrut authorities, am I a sinner for sticking to sorbet? And if I haven't yet made it to that fancy kosher restaurant in Manhattan, am I desperately in need of some atonement?

The answer, it would appear, has more to do with attitude than with blatant iniquity. What is the right way to live? What should be our approach to G-d's creation and the material world? Do we need to divorce ourselves from society in order to be holy? Should we reject anything that isn't wholly spiritual because we fear it may interfere with our piety?

There are ideologies which preach celibacy and revere those who sequester themselves from the daily grind of worldly activity. They see the body as unclean, and marriage as a less-than-ideal concession to human frailty. Then there are some who climb mountains to escape to the spiritual realms. The heavens are far more blissful and beautiful than the crass street corners and alleyways of city life.

Judaism sees it differently. We follow neither rejectionist nor escapist theologies. We embrace and engage G-d's world. Of course, there are clear

guidelines, even rules and regulations. But within the Torah framework we should work with the Almighty's universe. "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth." Earthiness, too, is part of His vast, eternal plan. That plan is that earthly beings, men and women, should invest their time, energy, wealth and wisdom to infuse the material realm with G-dliness.

Every mitzvah we do achieves just that. We take the physical and transform it to the spiritual, not by breaking it or running away from it, but by confronting it and molding it into something sacred and purposeful.

"Jews have no nunneries," goes the proverb. A yeshivah is meant to be not a monastery, but a school which will teach and train students to create spiritual value within the material world. So the nazirite, who because of his own moral weakness found it necessary to distance himself from that which the Creator permitted us, is somewhat sinful after all. And his attitude does indeed require some atonement.

Judaism calls upon us to live a higher, otherworldly life within this world. Rather than allowing the emptiness of a society to bring us down, we are challenged to assertively insist on changing our society for the better.

By all means, drink the wine, but make sure you make kiddush and say "L'Chaim!"

By Yossy Goldman

### NASO IN A NUTSHELL

Numbers 4:21–7:89

The name of the Parshah, "Naso," means "Count" and it is found in Numbers 4:22.

Completing the headcount of the Children of Israel taken in the Sinai Desert, a total of 8,580 Levite men between the ages of 30 and 50 are counted in a tally of those who will be doing the actual work of transporting the Tabernacle.

G-d communicates to Moses the law of the sotah, the wayward wife suspected of unfaithfulness to her husband. Also given is the law of the nazir, who forswears wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and is forbidden to become contaminated through contact with a dead body. Aaron and his descendants, the kohanim, are instructed on how to bless the people of Israel.

The leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel each bring their offerings for the inauguration of the altar. Although their gifts are identical, each is brought on a different day and is individually described by the Torah.

### NASO HAFTORAH IN A NUTSHELL

Judges 13:2-25.

This week's haftarah describes the birth of Samson, a lifetime nazirite. A condign haftarah for this week's reading, which discusses all the laws of the nazirite.

Manoah and his wife, members of the Tribe of Dan, were childless. One day an angel appeared to Manoah's wife, informing her that she will give birth to a child. This child, the angel instructed, was to be a lifetime Nazirite. In addition, the angel instructed her to abstain from all foods forbidden to a nazirite — such as wine or ritually impure foods — from the moment she would conceive. The angel further informed the woman that her son will save the Jewish people from the Philistine oppression they were enduring at that time.

The soon-to-be-mother told her husband the good news. He entreated G-d to send His messenger again — they were unaware at the time that the messenger was an angel. G-d sent the angel again, and he repeated his instructions.

*Sacred material – do not desecrate*

**Aleph Institute**  
Hyman & Martha Rogal Center  
5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
412-421-0111  
Fax: 412-521-5948  
www.alephne.org  
info@alephne.org



**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

Manoah and his wife then invited the angel to partake of a special meal they would prepare, but he declined. Instead he encouraged Manoah to offer the goat he wished to slaughter for the meal as a sacrifice to G-d. The angel then ascended to the heavens in the flame that devoured the sacrifice. The haftorah ends with the birth of Samson: "And the lad grew, and G-d blessed him."

#### THE MAN WHO GAVE CHARITY TO HIS EX

In the days of Rabbi Tanchuma, a drought took hold of the land. With parched fields and dwindling supplies, the people looked toward the azure sky with desperation. If rain didn't fall soon, they would all perish.

The people came before Rabbi Tanchuma and begged him, "Our teacher! Declare a communal fast so that we may fast and pray, and rain will fall!"

Rabbi Tanchuma declared a fast, but still, no rain came. He declared another fast, yet still, no rain fell. On the third occasion, he stood before the congregation and urged each person to fulfill acts of charity to the best of their ability so that they would be deserving of rain.

One of the men who heard Rabbi Tanchuma's teaching went home, gathered up whatever money he could find, and went to the marketplace.

There, he encountered his ex-wife.

She approached him and said, "May I merit a charitable act today, for since the day you divorced me, nothing good has ever happened to me."

The man could see that she was in dire straits indeed—she lacked proper clothing and was in great distress. Filled with compassion, he gave her the bundle of money and went on his way.

While the couple was standing there, they were observed by a passing individual who thought the worst of them.

Suspecting that they were acting improperly, the man approached Rabbi Tanchuma and said, "Honored Rabbi, how can you sit here in the study hall while terrible sins are happening in our community!?"

"What did you see?" Rabbi Tanchuma asked him.

"I saw so and so speaking with his ex-wife in the marketplace and he even handed her cash. I can only imagine why ..."

Rabbi Tanchuma ordered that the man suspected of misconduct be brought before him.

When the confused fellow appeared, Rabbi Tanchuma said to him, "My son, don't you know that the world is in distress? We are suffering, and even animals are in distress. Yet you are hanging out with your divorcee and even giving her money? Don't you realize that this behavior is inappropriate?"

The man responded, "Didn't you yourself teach us that the verse 'Do not ignore your flesh' means that one must be kind to his ex-wife? And didn't you say that everyone should fulfill acts of charity? Inspired by your words, I took what I had and went to seek a mitzvah. I met my ex-wife and it was clear to me that there would be no better recipient of my charity than her!"

At that moment, Rabbi Tanchuma lifted his eyes to the heavens and said, "Master of the Universe! The nature of people is to be mean toward our ex-spouses, and this man has no obligation to feed his former wife. Yet he was kind to her. How much more are You obligated to care for us, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! We rely on You alone. Please! Give us the rain we need!"

And at that very hour, rain began to fall, drenching the parched fields, filling rivers and creeks, bringing life and sustenance back to the land and its people.

By Menachem Posner

Source: Vayikra Rabbah Behar

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

*Sunday, 8 Sivan, 5786 – 24 May, 2026*

### **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, 9 Sivan, 5786 – 25 May, 2026*

### **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.

*Tuesday, 10 Sivan, 5786 – 26 May, 2026*

### **Wolf Wissotzky (1904)**

Klonimus Wolf Wissotzky, the son of poor parents, established The Wissotzky Tea company in 1849 and became known as the "King of Russian Tea." He was a great Jewish philanthropist and called for the settlement of Jews in Israel, which initiated the move of Jews to Lod, Nablus and Gaza. In his will he left over a million rubles to charity. In 1936, Wissotzky Tea became the very first tea company in Palestine and has since been the leading tea company in Israel.

*Wednesday, 11 Sivan, 5786 – 27 May, 2026*

### **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.