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Shabbat Nasso

Sat. 5 - 6 Jun. 2020 - 14th of Sivan, 5780

י"ד בסיון תש"פ

שבת פ' נשא

Issue Number 955

Shabbat Candles.	20:55
Latest Shema GRA.	8:49
Sunset.	21:09
Arbit Motzei Shabbat.	22:26
Next Friday: Candles. Shabbat. Beha'alotcha	20:58

THE SYNAGOGUE IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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Shahrit Sunday to Friday on ZOOM at 07:30

Please call Ghassan to join the service

Daf Hayomi with Rabbi Asher Sebbag on ZOOM

Sunday to Thursday at 18:00, Friday at 17:00

Please call Ghassan or David to join the Shiur

Money is a Great Servant But a Bad Master (Francis Bacon)

Naso 5780 (Numbers 4:21-7:89)

May 31, 2020 | by [Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig](#)

GOOD MORNING! As the United States slowly begins to open, the businesses that were closed the last several months start anew, and people begin to emerge from isolation, everyone is trying to adjust to the new normal. A good way to start is by counting our blessings while we continue to pray for those who

were severely affected and those who are still suffering (as addressed in the Shavuot Bonus Edition). We must also pray that our economy continues to improve, that jobs are quickly restored, and that people remain conscientious to avoid a second wave.

Perhaps most importantly, we must adjust how we think and step back for a clearer perspective. Ordinarily, we have a tendency to zero in on all that is wrong in our lives and to believe that as our lives get better, we will

have more joy. But the truth is really quite the opposite; when a person has more joy, he has a better life! How do you begin to acquire joy? By focusing on all the blessings in your life!

I am reminded of a joke about a group of seniors who were sitting around drinking coffee and discussing their various ailments. “My arms have gotten so weak I can hardly lift this cup of coffee,” said one. “Yes, I know,” said another, “My cataracts are so bad, I can’t even see my coffee.” “I often forget where I am, and where I’m going,” said a third. “What? Speak up! I can’t hear you!” shouted the fourth.

“I guess that’s the price we pay for getting old,” winced an old man as he slowly shook his head. The others nodded in agreement. “Well, count your blessings,” said the last member of the group, “Thank God we can all still drive!”

In this week’s Torah reading we find perhaps the most well-known blessing in Judaism, the “Priestly Blessing.” God instructs Moses to entrust his brother Aaron and his sons – the Cohanim (priestly caste) of the Jewish people – with the responsibility of

blessing the Jewish people. This blessing, known in Hebrew as “*Birkat Cohanim*,” is:

“May God bless you and keep watch over you. May God’s countenance be illuminated towards you and endow you with grace. May God direct His providence toward you and grant you peace.”

The Torah continues, “*They will thus link My name with the Israelites and I will bless them*” (Numbers 6:24-27).

The practice continues to this very day; in Israel the Cohanim bless the worshippers in the synagogue daily, while in the diaspora the Ashkenazi custom is to only bless the congregation during the prayer services of the holidays (many Sephardic congregations continue to do the blessing daily). In addition, the Priestly Blessing is also used by Jewish parents all over the world to bless each child on Friday night before the Shabbat meal.

Perhaps fittingly, this is also the oldest known Biblical text that has been found; silver scrolls with these verses written on them have been found in graves at Ketef Hinnom (an archeological site a little southwest of the Old City of

Jerusalem). These scrolls dating from the First Temple Period are estimated to be from late 6th century BCE – about 2,500 years ago! This “Silver Scroll” is on display at the Israel Museum.

During the priestly blessing, the Cohen stands in front of the congregation with the *tallit* (prayer shawl) over his head and body and with outstretched arms he raises his hands with the palms facing downward and the thumbs of his outspread hands touching. The four fingers on each hand are customarily split into two sets of two fingers each. The Cohanim chant the same Priestly Blessing that Moses taught their ancestor Aaron 3,500 years ago, and in this manner bless the congregation.

(For those of you having a difficult time picturing the position of their hands in your mind, the following anecdote will certainly clarify it for you. In the mid-1960s, actor Leonard Nimoy, who was raised in a traditional Jewish home, used a single-handed version of this gesture to create the Vulcan salute for his character, Spock, on Star Trek. He has explained that while attending Orthodox services as a child, he

peeked from under his father's tallit and saw the gesture; many years later, when introducing the character of Mr. Spock, he and series creator Gene Roddenberry thought a physical component should accompany the verbal "Live long and prosper" greeting. The Jewish priestly gesture looked sufficiently alien and mysterious and thus became part of Star Trek lore.)

In Hebrew, the word for blessed is “*baruch*” and a blessing is called a “*bracha*.” The Hebrew language is a holy one and words aren’t merely happenstance. According to Jewish tradition, there is a deeper, more mystical meaning to the root of the word blessing.

As explained in prior editions of the Shabbat Shalom Weekly, each Hebrew letter has a numerical value assigned to it. Almost everyone is familiar with the importance of the number 18 in Judaism; this is the numerical value of the Hebrew word for “life – *chai*”. The Hebrew root word for blessing is comprised of the three letters *bet-reish-chaf* (ב-ר-ח).

These three letters are unique in that they are the only letters in the Hebrew alphabet that

are a precise doubling of the numerical value of the previous letter (*bet* is 2 while *aleph* is 1; *chaf* is 20 and the previous letter *yud* is 10; *reish* is 200 and before it *kuf* is 100). Thus, when you give someone a blessing (*bracha*) you are in essence giving a blessing that they should receive a multiple of what they have. But this needs further clarification. A multiple of what?

It is interesting to note that while there are many Midrashic explanations as to what precisely this blessing refers, Rashi – the preeminent commentator on the Torah – understands the first line of the Priestly Blessing to be referring to a blessing of wealth and a special protection from the Almighty not to lose it (see Rashi’s comment *Numbers* 6:24).

This is rather difficult to comprehend. First of all, it is practically stereotypical to claim that the most important thing to Jews is money. What about a blessing for family or one of good health? There seems to be many things that should precede an emphasis on money or wealth. Moreover, we find some teachings related to wealth that are downright negative: In the

second chapter of *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of Our Fathers) we find the teaching, “One who increases possessions increases worry” (2:8).

The answer lies in the concept of the true power of money. While it’s true that money is generally viewed as a vehicle to buying what a person desires, the real value in money is the potential good that one can accomplish by using it properly. In other words, the real point of money isn’t in the accumulation of it or even in the accumulation of material objects. The sages’ teaching that an accumulation of possessions also equals an accumulation of worries applies to a person who mindlessly focuses on acquiring many homes, cars, and other expressions of wealth to impress others.

On the other hand, for a person whose main focus and desire is to help improve the lives of others, their wealth can be put to use in a way that can essentially clone themselves, so to speak, to do far more good.

For example, if a person has an innate desire to feed those who don’t have access to healthy and

nutritious food, there are only a limited number of people for whom a person can prepare and distribute food. If a person is a doctor and wants to help people get healthy, there are a limited number of patients that he or she can actually see in a day. If a person's goal is to enlighten people with education, there are a limited number of hours in a day that they can spend teaching.

This is true no matter what good works a person pursues, because their individual time and resources are finite. However, with the proper resources (i.e. wealth) a person can, in effect, “multiply themselves” and achieve very lofty goals that they would be unable to achieve on their own. They can fund a food bank that will feed hundreds weekly, build hospitals that will care for thousands monthly, and set up schools that will educate generations to come. This is why the root for the word blessing (*bracha*) hints to its real power—that of being a multiple. If a person spends their money and energy focused on what they can buy themselves they are only increasing their long term anxiety. In that case, is money a blessing? Hardly.

In this way, money is a unique blessing to an individual; it is a multiple of one's self that cannot be accomplished even by having a large family. In fact, show me a person who looks at his children as an extension of himself and I will show you a person with a terrible relationship with their kids.

Thus, the ultimate blessing that a person can get, in terms of actualizing one's life, is the blessing of having resources to accomplish on behalf of others. Therefore, it is the focus of the Priestly Blessing for the Jewish people.



TORAH PORTION OF THE WEEK

Naso, Numbers 4:21 - 7:89

This week's portion includes further job instructions to the Levites and Moshe is instructed to purify the camp in preparation for the dedication of the Mishkan, the Portable Sanctuary.

Then four laws relating to the Cohanim are given: 1) Restitution for stolen property where the owner is deceased and has no next of kin -- goes to the Cohanim. 2) If a man suspects his wife of being unfaithful, he brings her to the

Cohanim for the Sotah clarification ceremony. 3) If a person chooses to withdraw from the material world and consecrate himself exclusively to the service of the Almighty by becoming a Nazir (vowing not to drink wine or eat grape products, come in contact with dead bodies, or cut his hair), he must come to the Cohen at the completion of the vow. 4) The Cohanim were instructed to bless the people with the Priestly Blessing (as described above).

The Mishkan is erected and dedicated on the first of Nissan in

the second year after the Exodus. The leaders of each tribe jointly give wagons and oxen to transport the Mishkan. During each of the twelve days of dedication, successively each tribal prince gives gifts of gold and silver vessels, sacrificial animals, and meal offerings. Every prince gives exactly the same gifts as every other prince.



In loving memory of
Rabbi Kalman Packouz
Kalman Moshe ben
Reuven Avigdor
1950-2019
Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

THE KEHILLA WISHES חיים ארוכים "LONG LIFE" TO THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE YAHRZEIT

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 01 Sivan Mr Ghassan Cohen | 24 Sivan Mr Charles Daniel |
| 01 Sivan Mr David AbayahouDayan | 24 Sivan Mr Yosef Daniel |
| 02 Sivan Mr Yossi Tamman | 24 Sivan Mrs Marcelle Daniel |
| 06 Sivan Mr Abraham S. Cohen | 24 Sivan Mr Maurice Rashty |
| 09 Sivan Mr Yossi Tamman | 24 Sivan Mr Nissan Nissan |
| 13 Sivan Mr Ronnie Rashty | 24 Sivan Mrs Farah Sheldon |
| 13 Sivan Mr Charles F. Silas | 24 Sivan Mr Freddy Nissan |
| 13 Sivan Mrs Judith Silas | 24 Sivan Mr Salman Nissan |
| 20 Sivan Mrs Annie Benjamin | 29 Sivan Mr Frederick Spitz |
| 21 Sivan Mr Solly Judah | |

Quote of the Week

Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many – not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.