

TorahFax: Nasso

Rabbi Zalmen Marazov

Monday, Sivan 9, 5783 (Hakhel Year) May 29, 2023

I hope you had a wonderful and inspiring Shavuot holiday. We all heard the Ten Commandments read in synagogue on Yom Tov and were all inspired to uphold and keep the Torah throughout the year.

At the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai Jews proclaimed, "Naase VeNishma" - "We will do and listen," committing to observe the mitzvot even before knowing what they were. Although this special event was a one-time occurrence, they agreed to adhere to G-d's commandments for all generations.

One may ask, "Why do I have to adhere to a promise which my ancestors make over 3000 years earlier?"

The answer is that we were all there at the Giving of the Torah. Our sages tell us that the soul of every Jew of all generations was at Mount Sinai when G-d gave the Torah. Thus, it's a promise which we ourselves made that we have to keep.

Now, it is our duty and responsibility to bring the lessons and teachings of the Torah, which we received on Shavuot, into practice in our day-to-day life. After Shavuot, we have to bring the Torah down from The Mountain into reality, into practice.

Our sages compare this to a merchant who travels to the big trade fair, once a year, to buy all the items he needs for his store for the entire year. At the fair, he packs everything he bought in huge boxes and brings them back from the fair with him. Throughout the year he unpacks the items little by little.

The same is with the holiday of Shavuot. On Shavuot, like the merchant at the fair, we acquire everything we need for the year. Then, throughout the year, we keep on unpacking and taking whatever we need for our spiritual well-being.

After Shavuot we should strengthen our dedication to Torah study and to support Torah study. We recite in the daily evening service, "The Torah is our life." Just as fish cannot survive without water, so Jews cannot survive as a nation without Torah.

One of the things we must remember each day is how we stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. The Torah is a gift which G-d gave and continues to give us each day.

This Shabbat, the Shabbat after Shavuot, we read Parshat Naso, which is the longest Parsha in the Torah. In Parshat Naso we find the three-fold priestly blessing, which was recited by the Kohanim (priests) in the Holy Temple. "May the L-rd bless you and guard you. May the L-rd make His countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the L-rd turn His countenance toward you and grant you Shalom-peace."

May we all be blessed with the blessing of peace on a personal level and a global level.

Tuesday, Sivan 10, 5783 (Hakhel Year) May 30, 2023

This week's Parsha is Naso, which is read on the Shabbat after the holiday of the Giving of the Torah, is the longest Parsha in the Torah. It consists of 176 verses.

In this Parsha we find the three-fold-priestly blessing, which the Kohanim (priests) recite on the holidays to bless the Jewish people. In Israel these blessings are recited by the kohanim each Shabbat or in some places each day.

Q. What is the connection between the three-fold-Priestly blessing and the fact that it is read on the Shabbat after Shavuot – the holiday when we received the Torah?

A. Blessing in Hebrew is "Beracha" which begins with the letter "Bet." The Torah also begins with the letter "Bet" ("Breishis").

Our sages ask, why doesn't the Torah begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alpha bet (Aleph)? They reply, "G-d wanted to begin the Torah with the Bet for it is the letter which means blessing." G-d wanted to tell us that through Torah we acquire blessings.

Thus, the Shabbat after the holiday of Shavuot we read the three-fold blessing, to show us that through Torah, which was given on Shavuot, one acquires G-d's blessings.

Also, the name of this Parsha, "Naso," means to "Elevate." Indeed, the Torah elevates us, as the saying goes, "When one is firmly connected on high, they do not fall below."

Q. On special days, such as Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, holidays etc. we read from the Torah about the specialty of that holiday and the special sacrifices brought on that holiday. Why do we read from the Torah also every regular Monday and Thursday? What is so special about Mondays and Thursdays?

A. There is a verse in the Torah from which our sages derive that three days must not pass without reading from the Torah.

Thus, the sages established that, in addition to Shabbat, we should also read from the Torah every Monday and Thursday, this way three days will not pass without Torah.

Q. Why were Mondays and Thursdays chosen rather than the other days of the week?

A. On these two days villagers and farmers from the nearby areas would come to the fair in the city. The Rabbis instituted to read the Torah on these two days so that people coming from small villages etc., where there were no synagogues, would get to hear the reading of the Torah while they were in the city.

Thursday, Sivan 12, 5783 (Hakhel Year) June 1, 2023

During the summer months, we recite a chapter of the Pirkei Avot every Shabbat. One of the teachings of the Talmudic sage, Hillel The Elder, in the second chapter of Pirkei Avot, (sometimes called "Ethics of our Fathers), is, "Do not judge your fellow until you come to his place."

In other words, if we see someone doing something wrong or something which in our eyes seems wrong, we should not judge them, unless we are in their place; in their position and have experienced what they experience.

Too often we judge others negatively, without giving any thought as to why they acted that way. Hillel tells us that if we put ourselves in their position, we may see that perhaps it wasn't their fault, as we originally thought. Or perhaps, the fault we see in others, may be our own faults which we don't see in ourselves but we see in others.

A man came to the doctor and complained that his wife has a hearing problem.

"How do you know she has a hearing problem?" asked the doctor.

"How do I know? I talk to her, and she doesn't answer. Surely, she has a hearing problem. But she refuses to see a doctor, claiming that she has no problem for she hears perfectly well," he replied.

The doctor thought for a while and said, "I want you to conduct the following test. Ask her something from across the room. If she doesn't reply, get a few feet closer and ask her again. Get closer and closer to her, a few feet each time, this way you'll be able to judge how bad her hearing is."

The next day the man asks his wife from across the room, "What's for supper tonight?" No answer. He walks a few feet closer, "My dear, what's for supper?" No answer. He goes another few feet forward and asks the same question. No reply. Finally, he gets within a foot of her and screams, "What's for supper?"

She yells back at him, "What's with your hearing. For the seventh time... chicken and potatoes!!!"

Too many times, we see faults in others and judge them negatively, when the faults may in fact be with us!

Hillel teaches us, get close to him. Get into his shoes and you may see things very differently. When you consider the person's background or conditions, you may realize that the flaw you see is not as bad as you think. You may even see that the fact that you perceived him or her in a negative light may actually be a result of something lacking within yourself!

We should always heed to Hillel's teaching, "Do not judge your fellow until you come to his place."

Friday, Sivan 13, 5783 (Hakhel Year) June 2, 2023

This Shabbat we read Parshat Naso, the longest Parsha in the Torah, which is read on the first Shabbat after Shavuot, the holiday of the Giving of the Torah.

In this Parsha we find the three-fold priestly blessing. G-d tells Moshe, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons saying: This is how you shall bless the Children of Israel; say to them, 'May the L-rd bless you and guard you. May the L-rd make

His countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the L-rd turn His countenance toward you and grant you peace.'"

This blessing is called "Birkat Kohanim" (priestly blessing). It is also called "Bracha Hamshuleshet" (three-fold blessing) because it contains three parts. This blessing is recited by the Kohanim on each of the festivals. In Israel it is recited by the Kohanim every Shabbat or even each day. It is also recited by the cantor every morning during the repeat of the morning service.

This blessing is a three-fold blessing, because it was given to the Jewish people in the merit of our three forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The blessing contains 15 Hebrew words, corresponding to the number of years that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived at the same time (Jacob was 15 when his grandfather Abraham passed away).

The combined numerical value of the first letters of the three Hebrew words in the first part of the blessing, "May the L-rd bless you and guard you," (Yud, Yud, Vav), add up to 26 - corresponding to the numerical value of G-d's name.

G-d tells Moshe to say to Aaron, "This is how you shall bless the children of Israel." The Hebrew word for "this is how" is "Koh", which has a numerical value of 25. This number is also significant.

1) It reminds us of the "S'hma Yisrael" (Hear O Israel) which has twenty-five letters.

2) The word "Bracha" (blessing) is mentioned twenty-five times in the Torah.

3) The word "Shalom" (peace) the last word in the Priestly blessing, is also mentioned twenty-five times in the Torah!

On the lighter side: After Shavuot, when we read the Ten Commandments from the Torah, a rabbi once placed an ad in the local newspaper in which he reprinted The Ten Commandments.

The members of his congregation were astonished. "Why did you pay for a newspaper ad when we can read The Ten Commandments in the Torah?" they asked.

The rabbi replied: "I noticed that many members of our congregation, unfortunately, take what they read in the paper more seriously than what they read in the Torah... So, I thought, perhaps if they read The Ten Commandments in the newspaper, they will take it seriously, too!"