

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of

Nasso

June 4, 2009

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
June 4, 2009

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Nasso

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. Spiritual Ascent, A Road with No Return

The Torah states, **“A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazerite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem; from new or aged wine shall he abstain, and he shall not drink...anything which grapes have been steeped...a razor shall not pass over his head...the growth of hair on his head shall grow...he shall not come near a dead person....he shall not contaminate himself upon their death...for the crown of G'd is upon his head. All the days of his abstinence he is holy to Hashem.”** One may choose to take upon himself the vow of the Nazerite in order to become closer to G'd. When one assumes the status of a Nazerite, he is considered “holy to Hashem.” He is thus not permitted to partake of grape products, cut his hair, or contaminate himself to the dead. The Torah tells us that upon the completion of the period of one's Nazeritehood, which is thirty days, one must bring three offerings, one of which is a sin offering.

If the Nazerite is a person of an exalted holy status, Ramban asks, “Why must the Nazerite, upon concluding his counting, bring a sin offering? What is his spiritual failing?” He answers, “According to the simple understanding, this individual is considered a sinner when he completes his Nazeritehood because now he has removed himself from the sanctity and service of G'd. It would have been appropriate for him to remain a Nazerite his entire life and be sanctified to G'd. As we find the verse in Amos, the Nazerite is equated to the prophet, although he does not have prophetic vision. He must be atoned because he has allowed himself to become contaminated and be associated with the lusts of existence. Therefore, he must bring a sin offering.” If one never chose to enter into the state of Nazeritehood there is no claim against him. However, if one did choose to ascend to the exalted holy state of Nazeritehood, one is considered to be a sinner for not remaining there at that level. What is the difference between the two? If one has the ability to

ascend to that special level and does not, why is he not considered to be a sinner?

There is a Torah obligation, which is incumbent upon every Jew to be involved in continuous Torah study. Only through engaging in it can one actualize his spiritual potential. If one does not acquire the portion of Torah that was meant to be his during his lifetime, it is considered to be a spiritual failing. However, if one does not become a Nazerite during his lifetime, it is not considered to be a claim, although he did not ascend to that special level. Every Jew has a unique and specific portion in Torah that was designated for him at Sinai, as we recite many times in our prayers, “give us our portion in Your Torah.” When one is born one is ordained with a spiritual potential. In order for one to achieve spiritual growth in one's lifetime, one must engage in Torah study for the sake of the performance of mitzvos. As the Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, “Great is the study (of Torah) because it is through it that one comes to action.” One is only able to reach his spiritual potential when he has acquired his full portion of Torah. If one chooses not to do so, it is considered to be his failing.

Nazeritehood, on the other hand, is a non-obligatory state into which one chooses to enter. One is able to fully actualize his spirituality without becoming a Nazerite. However, if one does choose to enter and to ascend to such an exalted state that is the equivalent of being a prophet, then it is considered to be an affront to G'd if he should leave this state in order to return to the mundane. If one does so he must bring a sin offering in order to atone.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos tells us that if one interrupts his Torah study to take notice of a tree by saying, “how beautiful is this tree”, although he is admiring G'd's creation, his life should be taken. This is because if one has engaged in Torah study, which is the ultimate level of spirituality, how could he interrupt it for something of lesser value, although he is admiring G'd's

creation! Just as the Nazirite who descends from his lofty level of holiness for something of lesser value is considered a sinner, so too is the one who disengages from his Torah study for something of lesser value.

2. The Patriarchs, an Essential Component for Spiritual Ascent

There is a Positive Commandment for the Priests (*Kohanim*) to bless the Jewish people. The priestly blessings are comprised of three separate blessings. The Torah states, **“May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you..”** Rashi explains, “May Hashem bless you” means that one’s possessions should be blessed and that “(G’d) should watch over you” so that thieves should not steal that which was given. When a master gives a gift to his servant, he cannot guarantee that it will not be stolen. However, G’d endows the Jewish people (His servants) with blessing and assures them that it will remain with them.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos cites two opinions as to why there are three prayer services every day – *Shachris* (morning service), *Mincha* (afternoon service), and *Arvis* (evening service). One opinion states that the three prayer services were enacted to correspond to the daily communal offerings that were brought in the Temple. *Shachris* corresponds to the “*Tamid shel Shachar* – morning communal offering,” *Mincha* corresponds to the “*Tamid shel bein ha’arbaayim* – closing afternoon communal offering,” and *Arvis* corresponds to the, “*Eivarim and pedarim* - the burning of the limbs and the fats during the nighttime period (that were left over from the daytime sacrifices).” Another opinion states that the basis for the three services is linked to the holy Patriarchs. They established the three services, as the Gemara states, “Avraham established *Shachris*, Yitzchak established *Mincha*, and Yaakov established *Arvis*.” Thus, the three services correspond to the Patriarchs who had established them. The holy Patriarchs opened the pathways through which the Jewish people are able to pray to G’d. Because the Patriarchs had a special relationship with G’d, when one prays during the times that they had, G’d is attentive to the prayer because it reminds Him of the Patriarchs, upon whose merit we draw upon. The Gemara concludes that both opinions regarding the enactment of three prayer services are true.

The Torah states in the Portion of Emor, **“When an ox or sheep or a goat is born...”** These are the only three species that qualify to be brought as an offering. The

Midrash states, “The species that qualify to be brought as offerings were chosen in the merit of the Patriarchs. The ox was chosen in the merit of Avraham. As it states regarding Avraham’s hosting of the angels, **“Avraham ran to the cattle...”** The sheep was chosen to qualify as an offering in the merit of Yitzchak. As the verse states regarding the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak), **“And Avraham looked up and saw- behold a ram – after it had been caught in the thicket...”** The goat was chosen to qualify to be an offering in the merit of Yaakov. As the Torah states (when Rivka, our Matriarch, told her son Yaakov to go and receive the blessing from his father Yitzchak), **“So now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch from there two good goats...”** The concept of sacrifices exists only within the context of the Attribute of Mercy. By bringing the sacrifices that correspond to each of the Patriarchs, the Jewish people remind G’d of the holy Patriarchs and are thus able to evoke the Attribute of Mercy in their merit.

Baal HaTurim explains that each of the three blessings which comprise the Priestly blessings corresponds to the Patriarchs. The first blessing, **“May Hashem bless you...”** corresponds to Avraham, our Patriarchs because the verse states, **“He blessed Avraham with everything (*ba kol*).”** The second blessing, **“Hashem lift His countenance...”** corresponds to Yitzchak our Patriarch. This is because when he was at the Akeidah the intensity of the Divine Presence was so great that he actually expired. Chazal tell us that G’d illuminated Yitzchak’s eyes and brought him back to life. The third blessing, **“...establish peace for you.”** corresponds to Yaakov, our Patriarch because the verse states regarding his supplication to G’d for safety, **“I should be brought back in Peace.”**

We see continuously that the merits of the holy Patriarchs are intertwined in every aspect of our service of G’d, even beyond our prayers and sacrifices. We say in the first blessing of the Amidah (Silent Prayer), “Who recalls the kindness of the Patriarchs...” Meaning, because of the unique level of spiritual accomplishment and their dimension of being, the Jewish people will draw upon the merit of the Patriarchs until the end of time. However, we also see that each of the individual prayer services have relevance to the Patriarchs, individually. When one performs a mitzvah, or any act of service to G’d, one generates merit for himself; however, simultaneously the mitzvah also identifies with the Patriarchs thus giving it special value. Because the mitzvah accomplishments of the Jewish people have continuously reflect the Patriarchs, their merit seemingly will never be depleted. Every time

one engages in prayer, brings offerings, or blesses the Jewish people with the Priestly blessings, the merit of the Patriarchs is not only drawn upon it is also replenished.

3. How Can One Be Safeguarded from His Natural Inclination

The Torah states, **“It was the day that Moshe completed the building of the Mishkan...”** The word that the Torah uses is “Vayehee (It was the day.) The first syllable of this word is “vay”, which means “woe.” The Midrash states, “On the day that Moshe had completed the building of the Mishkan G’d had said, ‘veiy (woe) to Me.’ Why did G’d say, ‘Woe to Me?’ It is analogous to king who had a contentious wife. She would continuously quarrel with her husband the king and cause him to become angry. He subsequently instructed her to make for him an elaborate regal garment, which needed an extended period of time to complete. As long as she was engaged in this project, there was no quarreling between the king and his wife because she was fully occupied with her chore. When she had completed the garment, she brought it to the king. He saw the garment and was satisfied; however, he said, ‘Woe to me. Woe to me.’ Hearing his expression of woe, the queen said to him, ‘After all I have toiled in making you this garment you say ‘Woe to me.’ Is this the way one should demonstrate one’s appreciation?’ The king responded, ‘Your accomplishment is pleasing to me; however, as long as you were occupied with this project we did quarrel. We had peace between us. I am concerned that now that you are no longer engaged you will once again quarrel with me and cause me to become angry.’ Similarly G’d said, ‘As long as my children were occupied in the building of the Mishkan they did not complain and anger Me; however, now that it is completed I am concerned that they will begin complaining.’ This is the reason G’d said, ‘Woe to me.’ On the day the Mishkan was completed.” Was the reason the Jewish people did not complain based on the fact that they were too occupied? Or is it based upon a more profound principle?

The Torah tells us that after G’d had destroyed the world with the Great Flood, He had said, **“I will no longer bring a Great Flood upon the world to destroy it, because the inclination of man is evil from the moment he is cast from the womb of his mother.”** The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that the evil inclination only comes upon man after he is born into existence. Maharal of Prague asks, “Why does the evil inclination not come upon the child in-utero, before he is born?” He explains that G’d had created the evil inclination in a manner that it cannot affect something that is completed. As long as the

individual is in the process of developing and growing, the evil inclination does not have permission to affect him. The evil inclination can only come upon something that is considered to be developed. Thus, it cannot affect the fetus in-utero.

Maharal explains that as long as one is in the process of advancing and developing in his spirituality, the evil inclination cannot affect him because the individual does not see himself in a “completed state.” However, if one acts and behaves as if he is in a completed state regarding his spiritual development, he will be subject to the influences of the evil inclination. Thus, as long as the Jewish people were preoccupied with the mitzvah of building the Mishkan, it was not that they did not have time to complain, but rather they were not susceptible to the evil inclination. Because they were invested in their spiritual development through the building of the Mishkan, they perceived their situation in a positive manner. However, upon its completion, G’d said “Woe to Me” because they were no longer engaged in mitzvah activity and may feel spiritually accomplished, they would no longer be safeguarded from the evil inclination.

We see something similar regarding the attack of the Amalekites upon the Jewish people when they had left Egypt. The Torah states, **“Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim.”** The Midrash explains that the reason the Torah identifies the location as Rephidim is because the Jewish people were not fully invested in Torah study and mitzvah observance. Not being fully engaged in Torah study is an indication that they were satisfied with their spiritual accomplishment. Subsequently they had questioned, “Is G’d in our midst?” despite the fact that they had witnessed the ten plagues of Egypt and the splitting of the Sea. This was an outgrowth of the evil inclination.

There is a custom that when one completes the study of a tractate one immediately begins another tractate. In addition, when one finishes a chapter of a tractate before beginning the next, “Many returns ‘hadran’ from us to you and from you to us, Tractate...” Meaning, he will review what he has learned. There is never a moment when the Jew is truly completed in his acquisition of Torah. One must be continuously involved in its pursuit. The life of a Jew must be a “work in progress” regarding his spirituality so that he cannot be influenced by the evil inclination. However, if one does feel a sense of pride and completion in his spiritual growth and thus disengages from his level of involvement, he becomes subject to the influence of the evil inclination. With this we can understand the meaning of the Gemara in Tractate

Kiddushin which states, "I (G'd) have created the evil inclination and I have created the Torah as its antidote." As long as one is engaged in Torah study and mitzvah performance, he will be safeguarded from the influence of the evil inclination because he is continuously evolving into a more advanced level of spiritual development.

4. Seeing Beyond the Obvious

The Torah states, "**It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle...**" The Midrash states, "King Solomon writes, 'The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit. And the one who watches over his master shall be honored.' G'd does not withhold the just reward from any creature. For whatever one toils and sacrifices, G'd does not withhold reward from him. This is the meaning of the words of King Solomon."

The Torah tells us that if one comes upon the remains of an animal that was mauled in the field (not ritually slaughtered), one is not permitted to partake of it. One should give it to the dog. The Gemara in Tractate Chulin tells us that the reason for this is, "G'd does not withhold the just reward from any creature." At the time of the tenth plague in Egypt, the killing of the first-born, G'd had said that the dogs should not bark. Because the dogs had restrained themselves and did not bark, G'd rewarded them. The remains of the animal found mauled in the field should be thrown to the dog. We learn from this passage that G'd does not withhold reward even from a lowly creature. If the principle that G'd does not withhold reward from any creature is established from G'd rewarding the dog for not barking in Egypt, why does the Midrash need to cite a verse from Proverbs in order to establish the same principle?

The Midrash continues, "King Solomon built and completed the First Temple. However because King David had sacrificed selflessly for its building by purchasing its location and longing to be able to build it, he should be remembered. As it states, 'G'd had promised: You should remember David and how he was afflicted to bring about the Temple. He yearned to be able to enter into My House.' Thus, G'd did not withhold his reward. The Temple was identified with his name. As it states, 'This is a song for the inauguration of the House of David.' Was it King David who inaugurated the Temple? It was King Solomon, his son who had done so. However because King David sacrificed for it, the Temple is identified with his name. As it states in Proverbs, 'The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit.' We also find regarding the building of the Mishkan, that although every

Jew had sacrificed for the building of the Mishkan...However, it was is because Moshe had given of himself selflessly and sacrificed to a greater degree, that the Mishkan is identified with his name...It states, '**It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle...**' If all of the Jewish people assisted in erecting the Mishkan, why does the Torah attribute its completion to Moshe? It was because of his sacrifice for it..."

There are times that one is able to succeed in an endeavor not only because he merits to actualize it, but rather, it is because someone who had preceded him set a certain dynamic in motion that allowed him to succeed. Although it was King Solomon who had built and completed the Temple, it was because of the sacrifice and supplications of his father King David, that he was able to do so. King David's level of sacrifice and devout righteousness was the reason that King Solomon was able to build the Temple.

Similarly, it was only because of the sacrifice, righteousness, and supplications of Moshe, that the Mishkan was able to be completed. The Jewish people were only spared after the sin of the Golden Calf because of Moshe's beseeching G'd on their behalf. It was only because Moshe had given his blessing that G'd's Presence should dwell in their handiwork that the Mishkan was able to be functional. Had it not been for his blessing, the Mishkan would have only been an ornate edifice without G'd's Presence. Moshe lived only for the glory of G'd and that the Jewish people should be the beneficiaries of G'd's blessings.

G'd did not withhold reward from the dog because it did not bark. Similarly, any creature or human being would receive its just reward based on the principle that "G'd does not withhold the just reward from any creature." The Midrash that cites the words of King Solomon in Proverbs teaches us, that this principle can also be applied in instances even when an individual is not directly involved in the outcome. Although King David was not involved in the building of the Temple; however, because of his selfless sacrifice for its existence that created a momentum that allowed it to come about, it identifies with his name. Because King David was pained that the Divine Presence was not in a permanent location, his son King Solomon was able to build the Temple.

If one lives a life that is dedicated to G'd through Torah study and mitzvah observance and yearns for His Glory; although he may not merit to see his aspirations and prayers answered in his day, he will be the beneficiary of

the ultimate outcome. Because he was a contributing factor to set the dynamic in motion, the end result identifies with him.

5. *Internalizing the Privileged Status of Being G'd's Chosen People*

The Torah states, **“They stood *b'tachtis ha har* .“** The simple understanding of the verse is “They stood at the foot of the mountain.” However, the Gemara in Tractate Shabbos explains that the word “tachtis” literally means “under” the mountain, rather than “at the foot of” the mountain. Meaning, G'd held the mountain over their heads “like a barrel and said to them: If you accept the Torah it will be good for you; however, if you do not, there you will be buried.” The Jewish people accepted the Torah with their declaration of, “*Naaseh V'nishma*- We will do and we will listen.”

The Gemara continues, “Regarding the manner in which the Torah was presented to the Jewish people, there is a basis for a disclaimer. It was given under duress and coercion. They were compelled to accept it. Because of this disclaimer the level of liability is to a lesser degree than one who had accepted the Torah wholeheartedly and willingly. However Raba states, ‘Nevertheless at the time of Achashveirosh (Purim) the Jewish people reaffirmed their initial acceptance of the Torah with love. As it is stated in the Megillah of Esther, ‘They fulfilled it and accepted it upon themselves.’” Therefore, after Purim it was no longer considered that its acceptance was under coercion but rather it was of their own volition and wholeheartedness.

The Midrash in the Portion of Bereishis states, “He Gazed into the Torah and Created the world.” The Torah itself was the blueprint for all existence. The Torah begins, **“*Bereishis bara Elokim* – In the beginning G'd created...”** Chazal explain that the word **“*Bereishis*”** in its grammatical form is to be understood that, **“*B'shvil Reishis bara Elokeem...* – for the sake of ‘the choicest’ (which is the Torah) G'd created Heaven and Earth...”** The term **“*Bereishis*”** also alludes to the Jewish people who are the chosen who will accept the Torah at Sinai. Thus, every aspect of creation came about only to be the setting for the fulfillment of the Torah by the Jewish people. Every aspect of existence is a necessity for the fulfillment of the Torah. If the Jewish people would have rejected the Torah, the world would have reverted back to a pre-existent state, because the objective of creation would not have been met. If this is so, why was G'd's ultimatum to the Jewish people

to accept the Torah considered to be a setting of coercion and duress?

If one wishes to be hired for a position that requires an unusual level of commitment, it is understood that the prospective employee must agree to meet the responsibilities of that position. Being agreeable to accept employment under the terms of the employer is not considered to be under duress. The individual is not being forced to accept the employment of the employer. G'd's only objective of creation was that it should be the setting for the Jewish people to fulfill the Torah. If they had chosen to reject the Torah, then the sole objective and purpose of creation would never have been met. What is then the basis for the disclaimer that is mentioned in the Gemara?

G'd gave the Jewish people the most precious and valuable gift in all of existence, the Torah itself. King Solomon writes in Proverbs, “ (G'd said to the Jewish people) I have given you a good commodity (*lekach tov*) do not abandon it.” Since G'd Himself, the Infinite Being identifies the Torah as “a good commodity” it is an indication that the Torah is truly precious in the absolute sense.

Chofetz Chaim in his writings explains this with an allegory. Although an ordinary person may consider a possession of his to be special, the minister of the king, who has at his disposal greater levels of wealth, does not consider that object to be special. Whatever the minister may consider to be special and unique, the king himself, who possesses treasures beyond that of most peoples' purview, considers the possessions of the minister as inconsequential. Whatever the mere mortal, including the king, considers as out of the ordinary and precious, the spiritual angel considers it to be meaningless and without special value. Whatever is within the scope of the angel, to be considered special and of enormous value, G'd the Omnipotent and Infinite Being considers it to be meaningless. Thus, if G'd the Creator of Existence, Who is the Master of All, tells the Jewish people that He is giving them something that He values as a “special commodity” then it is truly the most precious gift in the most absolute context.

Understanding this, when the Jewish people were presented with the opportunity and privilege to accept the ultimate from G'd, His Torah, they should have been overwhelmed with joy that He had chosen them to be worthy of His gift. If at Sinai the Jewish people had unequivocally accepted the Torah with their declaration of, **“*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen”**

because of their faith in G'd, why then did He need to put the Mountain over their heads and give them an ultimatum?

Tosfos answers that G'd had revealed to the Jewish people the fires of *gehenom* which indicated their level of liability if they should deviate from the Word of G'd. Upon seeing the gravity of their responsibility, they wanted to retract their initial acceptance. Therefore, G'd needed to give them an ultimatum so that they should adhere to their initial commitment and not back out.

Even after realizing the ramifications of their failings and liabilities of their actions, the Jewish people should have nevertheless accepted the Torah not within the context of coercion, because the world must continue; but rather as the ultimate privilege and opportunity. It is thus considered as if they had accepted the Torah under duress because they did not truly appreciate its value. It was not until many generations into the future that the Jewish people fully appreciated the extent of G'd's love for them and the value of His Torah when He saved them from physical destruction at the time of Purim. Understanding their special value in G'd's Eyes caused them to reaffirm their acceptance of Torah with love and reverence.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Kamah
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00-2:00 pm	Ramchal: Derech Hashem Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45 th FL.)

Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm	Torah Insight Based on the Parsha Location: Yad Avraham
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Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Daas Tevunos Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm	Duties of The Heart Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL)