



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Naso

June 5, 2020

## A Taste of Torah

### A Unique Blessing

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

In this week's parsha, the longest one in the Torah, we learn of the dedication of the *Mizbe'ach* (Altar), a twelve-day celebration during which the *nasi* (prince) of each of the Twelve Tribes brought a special combination of different animals and vessels as an inaugural offering, one *nasi* daily. A basic examination of the verses reveals the interesting reality that each prince brought an identical offering consisting of the exact same items that were offered by each and every one of the other princes. Moreover, the Torah records the full details of the offerings of each *nasi*, despite the fact that the listings are identical. The obvious question, asked by almost anyone who stops a moment to ponder this lengthy section of the Torah, is: Why does the Torah go to such great lengths to detail everything, rather than just recording the first list of the items offered and then simply stating that those same items were offered by each of the other princes during the next eleven days? In addition, why was it necessary for a *nasi* from each and every tribe to participate in the dedication of the Altar - would it not have sufficed to have one *nasi* represent the entire Jewish Nation by bringing an offering on behalf of all of the tribes?

The Ramban (Bamidbar 7:2) answers the first question by citing the Medrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:14-20, 14:5-11) which teaches that each prince brought the same items with a totally different mindset and intention from his colleagues. For instance, Nachshon ben Aminadav, *nasi* of the Tribe of Yehuda, brought his offering based on a precise calculation corresponding to the theme of kingship, since the monarchy is vested in his tribe. Nesanel be Tzu'ar, *nasi* of the Tribe of Yissachar, brought his offering based upon its connection to dedication to Torah study, a trait personified by Yissachar, while Eliyav ben Cheilon of Zevulun predicated everything upon the idea of the support of

Torah, as the members of his tribe excelled in this area. The Torah therefore records each offering separately, says the Ramban, since each offering, while externally identical, contained a unique internal reality based upon the lofty thoughts and intentions of each *nasi*.

The aforementioned Medrash provides a striking introduction to this discussion, explaining that every tribe had a tradition from our patriarch Yaakov regarding events that would occur to that tribe far into the future. The Medrash thus explains that many of the hidden allusions contained within the offerings related to occurrences involving that tribe that would occur at a later point in time, as well as events that had already taken place. This Medrash needs some explanation, for in what way are Yaakov's predictions connected to the inaugural offerings of the *Mizbe'ach*?

Perhaps this can be explained based on an idea from Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky (1891-1986). In the final parsha of the Book of Bereishis (Bereishis 49:1), Yaakov called his sons together and spoke to each of them individually in what is commonly known as "the Blessings of Yaakov." Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes Liyaakov Bereishis *ibid.*) explains that these blessings are not mere wishes bestowed by Yaakov upon his children. Rather, Yaakov gave instructions for his sons and their descendants to follow for all time. On the one hand, each son was given his own unique directive, including an appraisal of his strengths, unique characteristics, and unique role in the Jewish Nation, as well as guidance for that son's future and destiny. This means that each son, and the tribe that would emerge from him, is special and plays his own unique role in the destiny of the Jewish People. On the other hand, Rabbi Kamenetsky continues, Yaakov ensured that each and every son was present to hear the directive given to the other sons, as well. This ensured that the message of

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## Stories for the Soul

### Fast Break

Mr. Yaakov Yosef Herman (1880-1967) lived in New York during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the age of 33, he began fasting daily, breaking his fast after nightfall. Because he taught Torah classes in the evening, he often arrived home for his sole daily meal after 10 pm.

Mr. Herman asked his doctor what foods he required to maintain his health. Based on the doctor's advice that he needed ample protein, fat, carbohydrates and iron, he ate the same thing every evening: Bread, sardines, a coffee with sugar, and a pear.

At one point, Mr. Herman travelled to Europe, where he had the opportunity to meet with the saintly Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan. Mr. Herman's wife, Mr. Aidel Herman, had a rabbi who was close to the Chofetz Chaim send him a letter asking him to convince Mr. Herman to stop fasting.

When Mr. Herman arrived at the Chofetz Chaim's house, the Chofetz Chaim offered him some food, but Mr. Herman demurred, explaining that it was *Bahab* (an acronym referring to Mondays and Thursdays, days of the week upon which it is more common for Jews to fast). While it is not known what the Chofetz Chaim discussed with Mr. Herman thereafter, the Chofetz Chaim replied to the letter from the rabbi saying that Mr. Herman's fasting should be left alone.

Much later in life, after Mr. Herman had immigrated to the Land of Israel, he developed acute sciatica. The doctor felt it was due to his constant fasting, and so, after much consultation, Mr. Herman agreed to fast on Mondays and Thursdays only; his medical issue

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# Kollel Happenings

## KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), email [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

## HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

# Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1) From 3, or 2, or 1                  | 4) Sacrifice for sacrificing |
| 2) What you don't give is what you get | 5) Don't get mad             |
| 3) Shaitel                             | 6) The Ten Commandments      |

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part VII

Many famous personalities of that time corresponded with Rabbi Menashe. These included Queen Christina of Sweden, whom Rabbi Menashe ben Israel nearly

convinced to allow Jews to settle in her kingdom (which, during the 1600s, was a significant empire).

## A Taste of Torah

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uniqueness was understood in the proper context of unity; each tribe is indeed special and can be matched by none other, but all of the other tribes are special, too, and are a vital part of the big picture of the Jewish Nation. In this way, the collective role of the Jewish People can be achieved; each tribe, and, in truth, each person, contributes its own distinct and unmatched part to sanctifying G-d in its own special way. When added together, these collected and unified contributions bring about the full dazzling sanctification of G-d's Name in this world.

Based on the explanation of Rabbi Kamenetsky, it can be suggested that when the Medrash discusses Yaakov's revelation of the future occurrences of each tribe, it is referring to Yaakov's final instructions to each son regarding his unique nature and destiny. Indeed, many of the verses that the Medrash relates to each *nasi's* thoughts and intentions for his offering are taken from the aforementioned Blessings of Yaakov.

Thus, each *nasi*, based upon the special directive passed down to his tribe from Yaakov, brought his offering based upon the unique strengths, characteristics, and role of his tribe. Each prince's offering was unique and necessary, because that offering corresponded to that particular tribe's makeup and strengths, and could not be provided by the offering of any other tribe.

The Torah thus imparts a vital lesson to us all. For the service of G-d to be performed upon the Altar, it is insufficient if only some people, tribes, or parts of the Jewish Nation participate. This is so even if the service of each person is precisely identical to that of everyone else. For the service of G-d to be complete, there needs to be a contribution from each and every member of the Jewish Nation in his or her special way and flavor, with the realization that one's individual part must become part of a glorious whole created from the collected contributions of every single Jew.

## Stories for the Soul

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improved thereafter.

This week's parsha discusses the *nazir*, an individual who, among other things, accepts not to consume wine or any grape products at all. Our Sages teach that while

a *nazir* is holy, taking a vow of abstention from worldly indulgences is to be admired only when it is done properly and for the right reasons.

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1) From 3, or 2, or 1                  | 5:2 s.v. <i>vishalchu</i>  |
| 2) What you don't give is what you get | 5:10 s.v. <i>v'ish</i>     |
| 3) Shaitel source                      | 5:18 s.v. <i>upara</i>     |
| 4) Sacrifice for sacrificing           | 6:11 s.v. <i>mat'asher</i> |
| 5) Don't get mad                       | 6:26 s.v. <i>yisa</i>      |
| 6) The Ten Commandments                | 7:20 s.v. <i>asara</i>     |

## Parsha Quizzers - Answers