



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

Dedicated to the hatzlacha of
the family Shmarya

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l

 500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666

 en@h-l.org.il


 www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en

 HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel

 (954) 800-6526

 HameirLaaretsEN

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Parshat Naso

A Search for Lasting Inspiration

Meir's thoughts churned within him with excitement. *A year has passed since the last time I stayed in a yeshiva for the festival of Shavuot. And I have to say that Shavuot was something special.*

The atmosphere, the sweetness, the holiness—the hundreds of young men who sat and lovingly pored over the Gemara for long hours into the night, the sounds of study and melody that issued from their hearts—all this awakened in me a yearning and longing to be a better Jew, more spiritual and pure.

Meir's thoughts continued to raise memories... Scenes, scents, sounds—all of them rose up within him and filled his heart with joy.

Meir felt that he had to share his heart's excitement with someone, so he called his friend Yossi, who had also been with him in yeshiva last year.

"Yossi!" Meir's voice burst through the receiver. "I imagine that you, like me, are still inspired by the experience we had last year!"

"How did you come to that conclusion?" Yossi asked in wonder.

Meir was taken aback. *After such an uplifting stay in yeshiva, how could there be any other reality?*

"I don't understand what you're talking about," Yossi said irritably. "I too enjoyed the time in yeshiva, but the inspiration has long passed; I barely remember Shavuot night, to be honest."

Meir hung up the call in disappointment, and thoughts of confusion filled his heart—*Maybe someone can explain to me what is going on here? Am I imagining things; have I gone off the deep end?...*

Parshat Naso - The Mystery of 176 in the Torah, Psalms, and the Talmud

Those questions continued to accompany him throughout the day, and later that evening, suddenly, a memory from the past surfaced in his mind.

There he was, young Meir, sitting in a small group session with the *mashgiach* (spiritual mentor), who was discussing with them a concept called

chavayat ha-chayim (חַוִּיַּת הַחַיִּים) – the "experience of life."

The *mashgiach* explained, "Know that each person's individual perception of reality is his 'experience of life.' These experiences, as he envisions them, are what form life itself."

In the wake of these memories and these ideas, the booklet before you was written.

The Mystery of 176 in the Torah, Psalms, and the Talmud

This week, G-d-willing, we read the second parashah of the Book of Bamidbar – Parashat Naso. Notably, Parashat Naso is read most years on the Shabbat that follows the festival of Shavuot. As a mnemonic, our sages have said: "Naso" is an acronym for *nikreit achar Shavuot* – "[it is] read after Shavuot."

Parashat Naso is the parashah with the greatest number of verses in the Torah, containing 176 verses, and it comprises ten subjects, namely:

1. An explanation of the duties of the sons of Gershon and Merari;
2. The census of the tribe of Levi in detail;
3. The census of the tribe of Levi in total;
4. The law of sending the impure (*tamei*) out of the camp;
5. The law of the thief who swears falsely;
6. The section of the Sotah (suspected adulteress);
7. The section of the Nazirite;

8. The Priestly Blessing;

9. At great length, the entire account of the offerings of the princes at the dedication of the Mishkan (as described in Chapter 7, the longest chapter in the Torah, consisting of 89 verses);

10. It concludes with the revelation of G-d to Moses, and ends with the verse: "When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with [G-d], he would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was atop the Ark of the Covenant, from between the two cherubim; and It spoke to him" (Numbers 7:89).

We also find that in the Book of Psalms, the longest chapter consists of 176 verses—Psalm 119. This Psalm concludes with a

verse that describes the soul's renewal from spiritual slumber, as it says: "I have strayed like a lost sheep; seek out Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your commandments" (Psalms 119:176).¹

Interestingly enough, we also find in the Talmud that the longest Tractate – *Bava Batra* – concludes on page 176, and ends with the following statement: "A guarantor on a court-administered debt does not require a *kinyan* (קניין, formal act of contract), for by the very benefit of being trusted by the *Beit Din* (rabbinical court), he fully resolves in his mind to obligate himself" (*Bava Batra* 176b).

The Lubavitcher Rebbe once expounded at length in explanation of this final passage of the Gemara, and

...*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*...

1. A Jew whose soul is asleep within him may be confident and assured that he is righteous and perfect in all areas and that after his passing he will go straight to *Gan Eden*... But often, this feeling stems from the fact that he dwells in great spiritual darkness and that the

kelipot (the impure husks) powerfully surround him. However, when a Jew merits to awaken and to become aware of his dismal spiritual state, he can hear the cry of his soul called to its Maker: "Father, have mercy on me; I have strayed like a lost sheep!" (Psalms 119:176).



added an insight into its inner dimension as well:²

Tractate Bava Batra concludes with [the case of] a Jew who merited to reach such a level that he has already emerged from his private world—the world of ego and self—and is now prepared to devote and subjugate his soul for the sake of another.

He does not need to be prompted to do so by concrete action (by means of a *kinyan*, a

formal act), but even the slightest emotional gratification (a most subtle feeling that by itself amounts to nothing) will already awaken in his heart the desire to give of himself for another.³

These three instances each conclude with mention of a new spiritual revelation: the prophecy from G-d that was in the Mishkan, a Jew's spiritual awakening from spiritual slumber, and the sacrifice that a Jew accepts upon himself for the

 *Wellsprings of Wisdom* 

2. *Likutei Sichot* – Hebrew translation (vol. 26, p. 170).

3. In his book *Bachozek Yad* (p. 93), Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh Ariel relates the following story:

It was the final days of World War II. Many refugees were left utterly alone. The spontaneous joy of liberation quickly gave way to a cruel despair: everything was gone. *So where do I go now? they wondered. Why was I left alive? Why am I not resting in the ground alongside my parents?* Emptiness pressed hard at their hearts, and a river of heartbreak threatened to sweep away their entire world.

In the streets of Italy, refugee yeshiva students wandered about, clinging with

their remaining strength to the fringes of faith and protecting the tiny spark of their will to live from being extinguished. It was not hunger that tormented them, nor the lack of bread. It was despair that devoured them, for they saw no hope of ever starting new lives—certainly not of ever taking a *Gemara* in hand again and clinging to its pages with every fiber of their being, nor of ever praying aloud again with tearful fervor. Many young survivors in displaced-persons camps roamed aimlessly, consumed by despair, collapsing spiritually and casting off the yoke of Heaven.

Around that time, a survivor named Dovid Leib Schwartz arrived at the illustrious *Yeshivat Roma*, the post-Holocaust yeshiva in Rome that

Parshat Naso - The Mystery of 176 in the Torah, Psalms, and the Talmud

gathered refugee students to rebuild Torah life until they could emigrate. Though only twenty-three, he was a bit older than many of the other young men.

During those days, Dovid Leib met a young Chassidic man—a descendant of renowned tzaddikim. Their chance encounter came at a dire moment: the young man was walking alone, emotionally and spiritually adrift. Sensing his distress, Dovid Leib gently tried to get him to open up and return to life. But the youth was already far gone, suspended somewhere between heaven and earth, ensnared in inner spiritual battles. Dovid Leib compassionately wished to extend a helping hand—one refugee to another. He spoke with him at length, with wisdom and gentleness, for he understood the young man’s heart.

The young man’s ears were not entirely closed. As Dovid Leib walked back and forth with him, the young man sensed that Dovid Leib hadn’t attached himself to him for no reason—it was as if Dovid Leib’s very soul refused to let him go. He felt that this young man beside him was filled with genuine compassion for a fellow Jew mired in despair. The broken young man realized that Dovid Leib loved him with a boundless love, and so he allowed him in. He agreed to let Dovid Leib guide him.

One day, the young man’s sealed heart suddenly opened. In that moment, he cried out from the depths of his despair to Dovid Leib:

“But what do you want from me? I’ve already lost my share in the World to Come. I... I have no World to Come! Just leave me be. Don’t torment me anymore—have mercy and let my wretched soul alone.”

The young man froze in shock. He couldn’t believe what he had just said—how had everything come out so suddenly? Dovid Leib stood there, silently feeling compassion for the sad soul.

Dovid Leib realized that this cry, which had escaped the young man’s lips, was a ploy from the “halls of delusion”—a cruel falsehood that had been planted in his heart by his evil inclination. It exploited the young man’s guilt and piled on more despair and hopelessness. *Heaven forbid!* The young man was wrong—he did have hope.

Dovid Leib felt agony in his heart, but he did not say anything aloud. The young man’s spirit had been shattered by the war, and a simple “No, that’s not true!” would not convince him in his state. Having lost his parents and siblings, the weight of his despair was too great; a quick reassurance would only anger him further.

Then an idea struck. In his great Ahavat Yisrael, Dovid Leib looked into the young man’s dark eyes and declared, “My dear young man, why do you say you have no share in the World to Come anymore? If that’s what’s troubling

Parshat Naso - The Geometry of Divine Development

sake of others. They all seem to have a symbolic connection to

the number 176,⁴ and we would do well to learn why this is so...

The Geometry of Divine Development

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh explained the uniqueness of the

number 176 that hints at the mystery of personal

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you—I'm prepared to give you my own share of the World to Come. I'll bring a quill and write you a contract in my own handwriting, written and signed according to all the relevant rules. Do you hear me? I am giving you mine!"

Dovid Leib paused, then continued more calmly, "But I have one condition. I will sell you my World to Come on the one condition that, from this day forward, you will study from the book *Shevet Musar* every single day. Every single day—meaning even on Purim, even on the eve of Yom Kippur—without exception. If you do so, then my share of the World to Come is yours, sealed and signed."

Rabbi Dovid Leib—who recounted this story casually many years later while wrapping the straps of his tefillin after the morning prayers—added with a smile, "Today that young man is a G-d-fearing Jew, one of the most respected observant Jews in his community."

The listener who heard this story asked in astonishment, "Rabbi Dovid Leib, how could you do such a thing—sell

your very own World to Come?!"

Rabbi Dovid Leib answered without hesitation, with wit: "I made a very simple calculation—I wouldn't lose out either way. If he keeps the condition I set and continues to climb upward spiritually, then one day, when he arrives in the World to Come and sees the portion that I gave him, he'll push it aside—he will be in a much higher place, and he won't need it at all. And if, on the other hand, he fails to study *Shevet Musar* even one day, the sale is nullified and I've lost nothing."

4. These three instances correlate with the three levels of divine revelation: *Nevuah* (prophecy), *Ruach Ha-kodesh* (Divine Spirit), and *Chochma* (wisdom).

"Prophecy" is expressed in Parashat Naso; "Ruach Ha-kodesh" descended and is expressed in the Book of Psalms, and is most poignantly encapsulated in Psalm 119, which contains 176 verses; and G-dly "Wisdom" was revealed in the Babylonian Talmud, in Tractate Bava Batra in particular, which contains 176 folio pages... (*Semuchim LeOlam*, p. 51a).

development—from a small one-dimensional point to a complete six-dimensional reality:⁵

The mystery of the number 176 will be better understood in light of the words of the Vilna Gaon, as printed at the end of his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah*:

Every physical solid that is squared has:

1. Six surfaces.
2. Twelve edges (also called boundary-diagonals).
3. Eight points (corners) where the ‘boundary-diagonals’ meet.

All of these surface elements are based upon the ‘Yud,’ which itself represents the downward descent of ‘point-line-plane’ (the letter *Yud* is spelled *Yud-Vav-Dalet*, and these three letters, \aleph , represent point, line, plane: *Yud* – a point; *Vav* – a line; *Dalet* – a plane of length and width.

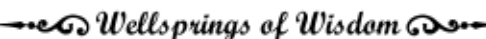
The same is also true of the letters \aleph of the Name of Havayah) — see his commentary for further insight.

Based on this concept, Rabbi Ginsburgh continues and explains:

The 8 points, 12 lines (edges), and 6 surfaces that naturally exist in every squared material matter, when added together, equal 26 individual components in total, corresponding to the numerical value of the Name Havayah ($\aleph + \aleph + \aleph = 26$).

Thus, the “mystery of the Name Havayah” of G-d, or the Tetragrammaton, is at the heart of the development of all existence which began as a point in space, to then form a line, and to then expand into a plane that has features and depth (in kabbalistic terminology it is to draw energy from being merely a point, to a *sefirah*, to a complete *partzuf* – a complete formation).

Now, the initial “point” is represented by the mystery of



5. *Sha'ashu'im Yom Yom* (vol. 2, p. 177).

the *pinah* (corner) of squared matter; the “line” of emanation – is hinted by the edges and lines of matter that connect the corners; the “plane” of matter represents the mystery of the *partzuf*, or *panim*, an entire mystical amalgamation.

Now, if we add these various components of all created matter as they are represented by the letter Yud, we reach the number $176 = 8$ points of matter multiplied by Yud (10), plus the 12 edges of matter multiplied by Vav (6), plus the 6 planes or surfaces multiplied by Dalet (4).

All of the Torah is an expression of the deep “mystery of Havayah,” as is known. The ultimate purpose of the entire Torah is that everything develops—physically and spiritually, and most importantly in its consciousness—till it recognizes and becomes one with the Name Havayah. Until the prophecy will be fulfilled: “For the earth shall be filled with

the knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

The development of the first point of Divine revelation in the world (the very word for “world,” *olam*, denotes *he’elem* and *hester*—the concealment of Divinity), the lightning-flash shining out into the darkness, is for the designed purpose of it expanding into a broad plane of divine awareness that becomes natural—a plane that reflects the “expansive space” of the Essence of the Infinite, blessed be He. This is the ultimate purpose of the entire Torah.

This is the mystery of the record number that we find in the Torah: 176, which connotes the full development of divine capacity and the actualization of the G-dly potential that is hidden in matter.

This concept is alluded to at the birth of Joseph, where his mother Rachel prayed: “May G-d give me an additional son” (Genesis 30:24). The words here “ה' יתן” have the value of 176,

Parshat Naso - The Duties of the Tribe of Levi

meaning that even the additional “otherness” of worldly matter will understand and be imbued (*yavin*, related to *ben-son*) and know and internalize the unity of G-d.

Thus, the number 176 hints at maximal spiritual development,

and wherever a matter of profound transformational growth is discussed, the number 176 appears.

Following this introduction, let us now focus on two specific verses in this week’s parashah...

The Duties of the Tribe of Levi

In the previous parashah, Parshat Bamidbar, we learned of G-d’s command to the Levites to dismantle the Mishkan before each journey, to carry all the parts of the Mishkan and its holy vessels, and at the end of each journey to reassemble the Mishkan,⁶ as it says: “Assign the Levites to the Tabernacle of the Covenant and to all its furnishings and all that pertains to it. They shall carry the Tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall tend it,

and shall camp around the Tabernacle. When the Tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down, and when the Tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up; the outsider who encroaches shall be put to death” (Numbers 1:50–51).

This privilege belonged solely to the sons of Levi, and was divided in an orderly fashion among the three houses of the tribe of Levi: the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari.

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6. During the 40 years of journeying in the wilderness, the Children of Israel undertook 42 journeys (as detailed at length in the beginning of Parashat Masei).

The Mishkan was first erected on the 12th journey, when the Israelites

were in the vicinity of Mount Sinai. It follows that the members of the tribe of Levi erected and dismantled the Mishkan 31 times (the first erection of the Mishkan was performed by Moses himself).

Parshat Naso - The Secret Merit of Abba Umna

The previous parashah concluded with the duties of the sons of Kehat: to carry the vessels of the Mishkan, among them the holy Menorah, the golden altar, the Table of the Showbread, and above all, the Ark of the Covenant.

Even though Kehat was not Levi's firstborn—Gershon was—nevertheless, the Torah related the duties of the Kehatites first, because of the great privilege that they had to carry the holiest matters of the Mishkan, including the Ark of the Tablets of the Covenant.

It is here, at the beginning of our parashah, that the Torah continues and details the duties of the sons of Gershon and Merari.

The Gershonites would carry the tapestries of the Mishkan and its covering, the screen for

the entrance of the Mishkan, the hanging curtains of the courtyard of the Mishkan and their ropes, and the screen of the entrance of the courtyard. The Torah concludes these details and commands: "And let them assign them, each man to his service and burden" (Numbers 4:19).

Then the Torah continues and enumerates the duties of the sons of Merari: to carry the planks of the Mishkan, its pillars, its bars and sockets, and likewise the pillars of the courtyard, their sockets, pegs, and ropes. Here as well, the Torah concludes and says: "Each man to his service and burden" (*ibid.*, v. 49).

We will discuss and examine these two verses, but beforehand, let us preface by learning a passage of Gemara in *Taanit*.

The Secret Merit of Abba Umna

In the Gemara (*Taanit* 21b) the following tale is related: "Abba Umna would receive greetings from the Heavenly Academy

every day, whereas Abaye [received them] every Erev Shabbat, and Rava every Erev Yom Kippur."

To explain:

In the third generation of *Amoraim* (sages of the Gemara) there lived three righteous men: Abaye, Rava, and Abba Umna.⁷

Abaye and Rava were leading sages of the Talmud who are mentioned on almost every page of the Gemara. Abba Umna, by contrast, was a physician by trade.

But despite Abba Umna being a doctor, he merited a level of revelation that Abaye and Rava did not reach – each and every day a Heavenly voice (*bat kol*) would go forth and announce: “Peace unto you, Abba Umna!”

Abaye merited this only on Erev Shabbat, and Rava once a year, on Erev Yom Kippur.

The Gemara continues:

Abaye felt distressed that he did not merit to receive greetings from Heaven daily, until he was answered from Heaven: “You are unable to do what Abba Umna does!”

The Gemara then relates Abba Umna’s righteous deeds:

Abba Umna was a bloodletter, as were most physicians in that era. When he would receive patients, he would bring them into his clinic (which had separate rooms for men and for women). For the women, he had a special cloak that had a tiny slit through which he performed the bloodletting, to maintain their modesty and dignity.

On the outside of his clinic, he hung a collection box, into

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7. The saintly Kabbalist Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano, wrote (*Gilgulei Neshamot*, entry “Mamre”): When our forefather Avraham wished to circumcise himself, he shared his plans with his friends—Eshkol, Aner and Mamre. Of all his friends, only Mamre strengthened his resolve

and told him: “My dear friend Avraham, go forth and circumcise yourself!”

Thousands of years passed, and the soul of Mamre was reincarnated in Abba Umna, and in that incarnation as Abba Umna, he succeeded in completely rectifying and refining himself.

which patients would drop their payment. He placed the box outside so that he would not know who had put money in the box and who had not. Nor would he know how much each person paid, for each would put in according to his ability.

Whenever a poor person came to him for treatment, Abba Umna would give him money from the box to buy himself something to eat and revive himself. If a Torah scholar came to him, Abba Umna would refuse to accept any payment from him at all.

On one occasion, Abaye sent two Torah scholars to test Abba Umna and examine his true character. When they came to him, Abba Umna provided them with food and drink and prepared for them a place to sleep. He took expensive woolen bedding and spread it under them to make their bed comfortable.

In the morning, the two scholars took the woolen bedding they had slept on and brought it to the market to sell...

Suddenly, they encountered Abba Umna. They said to him, "Please do us a favor and appraise our merchandise, and pay us its fair price." They watched him closely to see whether he suspected them of being thieves, or whether he would perhaps undervalue the merchandise.

Abba Umna said to them, "Such-and-such is the market value of this bedding." They asked him, "Maybe it is worth more than that?" He replied, "For that price, I purchased it myself." They then said to him, "This bedding is actually your own, and we stole it from your house. Now tell us: what did you think of us when you found out that we took the bedding?"

He answered them, "I thought to myself: Surely you encountered an opportunity to perform the mitzvah of redeeming captives and you needed funds, but out of embarrassment you did not ask me for money, and so you took the bedding to sell it."

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They said to him, "Take back your bedding, for we only did this to test you." He replied, "I will not take them back, since from the moment you took the bedding, I decided in my heart that it would be consecrated as charity."

Just like Abaye, Rava too was pained that the Heavenly greeting was heard by him only

once a year, but he was comforted from Heaven and told: "Do not be troubled at all. It is enough of a merit that through you, the entire city is protected from harm."

The lesson that is to be learned from this passage of Gemara must be engraved deeply into the recesses of the heart, and as we will elaborate...

Illuminating One's Unique Divine Spark

One of the more famous verses that was prophesied by Isaiah is: "And your nation is all righteous" (Isaiah 60:21) – each and every Jew among the people of Israel is a *tzaddik*, holy and righteous!

The saintly Rabbi Nachman of Breslov explained as follows (Likutei Moharan I, 34:4):

"Know that in every Jewish man and woman there is an essential connection to Judaism, a point of faith (*emunah*), a precious point, which no other person has besides him.

The point that exists in each and every Jew is a

point of divine vitality (*nekudat ha-chiyut haElokit*) that resides within him. As we say every morning: 'Elohai *Neshamah* shenatata bi tehorah hi' ('My G-d, the soul You have placed within me is pure!').

The G-dly point within each Jew is unique to him; nothing is analogous to it. There is none like it, nor has there been, nor will there ever be! It is special and singular in its uniqueness! And it is by virtue of this point that he reveals the Infinite Light of G-d, blessed be He, in his own way!"

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Yaakov Meir Shechter, he said the following:⁸

Every Jew is a conduit that reveals the infinite light of the Holy One, blessed be He, in our world in his own way. This is by virtue of the point of divine life that beats within him. About this point, it says, “And your nation is all righteous,” for in the essential inner point of every Jew, he is a complete tzaddik.

Abba Umna merited that this G-dly point in him shone forth, revealed in immense brightness.

Thus it is understood that although there is no comparison to the exceedingly great and exalted holiness of the holy Amora Abaye (indeed, even the holy Arizal writes in *Sefer HaGilgulim*, ch. 28, that Abaye's soul belongs to a most lofty place, the mystery of the “Wings of Atzilut”), nevertheless, Abba Umna had a special quality that even Abaye did not have. This was the

G-dly point that belonged to Abba Umna alone, which shone and radiated in full strength and might, such that as a result of it, he received greetings from Heaven every day.

But the same is true not only with Abba Umna. Every person—if he merits and the G-dly point that belongs to him shines forth—can be raised and exalted among all creatures to such an extent that no person will be comparable to him in the special point that is uniquely his. In this way, he is truly a novelty in all of creation... However, in order for a person's special point to shine fully, he must dedicate time to developing and cultivating it by seeking out G-d and engaging in Torah and prayer until he merits to attain his unique point.

He also needs a great deal of *heavenly assistance*, so that he will be given mercy and his point will be illuminated for him.

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Therefore, a person must work and toil in the good traits within himself that he senses as uniquely his.

Rabbi Shechter continues:

It is common for a person to ponder and scrutinize his fellow's situation—his fellow's spiritual virtues, soul-powers and talents, his fellow's material successes, such as his family life, his prestigious position, and the like—and to measure himself against that, sometimes at the cost of pangs of envy, jealousy, and other assorted ills... These pains intensify all the more whenever he imagines his own status compared to his fellow's status...

The Holy One, blessed be He, who cares for each and every one of His creatures, ordained for each individual a framework of various currents and waves that a person must traverse throughout the days of his life, experiences that precisely correspond to each

person's capacity and ability to withstand them.

All this is guided wondrously by divine providence, which demands from each person the fulfillment of the divine will in every detail in all that befalls him and that he undergoes. Only through this, precisely, will his soul shine and his special virtues be revealed.

As explained in Likutei Moharan (above), each and every Jew has within him the aspect of a "ruling tzaddik." In every Jew there is a precious point which his fellow does not have—as illustrated in the story of Abaye and Abba Umna. Abaye received greetings from Heaven every Erev Shabbat, whereas Abba Umna—who was a bloodletting doctor—received such a greeting every day. It is stated that it was said to Abaye: "You are not able to do the deeds of Abba Umna" (Taanit 21b)—meaning that this was the G-dly point that belonged specifically to Abba Umna. If Abaye had attempted to

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imitate—even the good deeds of Abba Umna—he would have

ended up being neither Abaye nor Abba Umna.⁹

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

9. *Rabbi Meir Shapira beMishnah, beOmer uveMa'aseh* (vol. 2, p. 208), quotes Rabbi Tzvi Hirshhorn, may G-d avenge his blood:

Rabbi Meir of Lublin was not only a genius of Halacha and Machshava (Jewish thought), an artisan of pilpul and derush (intricate Talmudic analysis and homiletic discourse), not only a man of a brilliant mind — he was also a man of a brilliant heart. He was a genius of feeling, of song and of poetry.

His prayer—as he poured out his whispers of supplication like a son pleading with his Father in Heaven—was a wellspring of outpouring of the soul and holy fervor. This perhaps assumed the central place in his life. His prayers, blazing in flame when he would lead the congregation, were a veritable segment of holy service, suffused with an abundance of sweetness and devotion, with pure heartfelt warmth and stirring, unalloyed inspiration. Whenever he prayed, streams of tears would flow from his eyes, softening even hearts of stone.

His great power in prayer is attested to by the following episode, which the author personally witnessed.

During one Shabbat when Rabbi Meir of Lublin was in the presence of his

teacher, the holy Rabbi Yisrael of Chortkov, an extraordinary event occurred. As was the custom of the righteous Rebbes of the Ruzhin dynasty, the Admor of Chortkov prayed during that Shabbat in a separate room adjacent to the synagogue. After the Torah reading, the door of the Rebbe's room suddenly opened; his holy figure appeared in the doorway, and he announced that he was honoring Rabbi Meir to serve as *shaliach tzibbur* (prayer leader) for the Musaf service.

Rabbi Meir's prayer at the lectern melted the hearts of the congregants. It was a prayer of soul-pouring that issued from the depths of a fiery, trembling heart, adorned with sweetly drawn-out melodies reminiscent of the World to Come. The entire crowd of thousands was swept up in an atmosphere like Yom Kippur, and the sweetness of his melodies permeated every fiber of their being.

After the prayer, as Rabbi Meir passed before the Admor to extend a "Good Shabbos" greeting, the Admor responded and remarked in amazement that he had not known until then that, aside from Rabbi Meir's gamut of brilliant talents, he was also endowed with such an exalted power of prayer. The Admor then invited Rabbi Meir to join him at his table

Parshat Naso - Illuminating One's Unique Divine Spark

for *Kiddush*, and sat together with him in private for a long and warm conversation.

Later that day, at *Seudah Shelishit* (the third Shabbat meal), Rabbi Meir sat with his group of companions, which included his closest friends, students, and supporters, and during the meal, Rabbi Meir revealed to them a bit of what had transpired during his private audience with the Admor. He related the following:

“During the Kiddush, the Admor of Chortkov continued to praise the wondrous power of my prayer. In light of that, I ventured to ask him: ‘If so, perhaps it is indeed fitting that I should become a permanent *shaliach tzibbur*. After all, I am a grandson of the holy tzaddik Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, who was renowned for his tremendous power in prayer...’

“The Admor of Chortkov grew serious, and after deep contemplation, he replied: ‘I would like to tell you a story of Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli.

“During his wanderings from city to city and country to country in self-imposed exile, Rabbi Zusha arrived in the city of Zalkowa, where the renowned yeshiva of Rabbi Yozfa—one of the greatest geniuses of that time—was located. Rabbi Zusha entered the study hall and saw Rabbi Yozfa standing and delivering to his students a sharp and profound pilpul on the sugya of “rov and chazaka” (majority versus legal presumption), shedding light on difficult and obscure passages from both the Bavli and

Yerushalmi. None of the students noticed or paid attention to the traveler who had entered—an individual who looked like a poor, bedraggled pauper, with a pack on his shoulder and a thick staff in his hand—who sat down in a corner and quietly listened to the lecture without taking his eyes off Rabbi Yozfa.

“At the conclusion of the shiur, Rabbi Zusha approached Rabbi Yozfa and said, ‘Yasher koach on the excellent lecture!’—noting that he found the teaching truly satisfying.

Rabbi Yozfa said to Rabbi Zusha, “I can understand that my lecture pleased you. But what puzzles me is how you, whom I’ve never met nor heard a word from, have found such great favor in my eyes.”

Rabbi Zusha replied humbly, “I too wonder—how could a simple man like me win the esteem of such a sage as yourself?”

Rabbi Yozfa answered, “It cannot be that you lack all wisdom or holiness. I sense a precious quality in you that draws the favor of those with a bit of understanding.”

Rabbi Zusha admitted, “All I know is how to pray.”

Rabbi Yozfa asked, “Is there a Jew who doesn’t know how to pray?”

Rabbi Zusha explained, “I mean that I know how one ought to pray before the Creator.”

Parshat Naso - Life Itself – the Experience of the Soul

Everything that occurs, ultimately, is in order to bring a person to his personal destiny that he must reach—each person according to what is apportioned to him, not any more or less. If a person merits to conduct himself properly and traverse his divinely ordained path in peace—fortunate is he, and good is his lot forever.

Yet, instead of a person contemplating and keeping careful watch over his own path so as not to stumble, to make it through safely—many fixate their attention and contemplation upon their fellow’s portion, not realizing that they can never attain the portion that belongs to their friend, and at the same time they are certainly going to lose out on their own portion...

Life Itself – the Experience of the Soul

The idea that one will never attain his fellow’s portion may

sound theoretical, and the heart may protest: Why not? If I work

~~~~~*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*~~~~~

When Rabbi Yozfa pressed him to reveal the secrets of prayer, they entered a private room and Rabbi Zusha taught many secrets until Rabbi Yozfa, moved to tears, exclaimed: “Rebbe, perhaps I should abandon my yeshiva and follow you, as Elisha followed Elijah the prophet, just to learn to pray even one word with true kavana!”

Rabbi Zusha answered calmly: “Do not rush to such thoughts. As our Sages have said (Berachot 58a), people’s minds and souls are not alike. Each is given a unique mission, and Heaven grants them the talent to fulfill it. Similarly it says (Avodah Zarah 19a): ‘A person

can learn Torah only in a place his heart desires.’ Your heart is drawn to Torah, and your mission is to lead the yeshiva and spread Torah. You must not abandon that role for another not meant for you.”

“In relating that story,” Rabbi Meir concluded, “the Admor of Chortkov conveyed to me his answer. He was hinting that the same response which Rabbi Zusha gave Rabbi Yozfa applied to me as well: *‘You should continue to head your yeshiva and give your shiurim, as per your mission, and I will continue to hold fast to the realm of prayer, as per my divinely ordained mission.’*”...

**Parshat Naso - The Exile Within**

as hard as he does, shouldn't I reach his level? In truth, this is a mistaken notion, for life is not determined by deeds or intellect alone.

The truth is that life is the 'experience of the soul' (*chavayat ha-nefesh*)!

Every person experiences life in a form and manner unique to him. There is no person who can experience his fellow's *experience of life*, because if he were to experience life in the very same way, he would *turn into* that

fellow, and they would not remain two distinct individuals!

The experience of life is the manner in which a person experiences his own selfhood (self-love, self-hatred, and the like), and all the events that befall him.

Thus, every person is born with feelings that "color" the screen of his vision and perception, and according to the quality of that color, so is his feeling of life.

We will elaborate further upon this concept.

**The Exile Within**

In the Gemara (Yoma 9b) a wondrous statement appears: "The early ones, whose sin was revealed – their end was revealed; the later ones, whose sin was not revealed – their end was not revealed."

"The early ones" – these were the Jews who sinned during the period of the First Temple. Their "sin was revealed" – they understood that the reason they were being punished was that

they had succumbed to three very grave sins: idolatry, illicit relationships, and bloodshed. "Their end was revealed" – G-d informed them that their punishment would last seventy years.

"The later ones" – these were the Jews who sinned during the period of the Second Temple. Their "sin was not revealed" – their sin was baseless hatred, yet they did not succeed in

**Parshat Naso - The Exile Within**

recognizing, repenting, or even admitting their sin. Therefore, “their end was not revealed” – G-d exiled them and sent them away from His presence without announcing the time of the redemption.

In the time of the Second Temple, the dark feeling of baseless hatred had manifested in people’s hearts, and this feeling colored their screen of vision and perception so that they could not grasp any alternative reality!

This dark feeling obscured their understanding, and they were unable to perceive or comprehend their sin – their sin was not revealed to them!

Likewise, within every person there may be some dark feeling that clouds his understanding and miscolors the experience of his life, and woe to the person who is unaware of the dark feelings of his soul, and whose sin is not revealed to him! Such a person remains far removed from redeeming his soul.

In a lesson taught by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (Likutei Moharan I, 36:1), he said the following:

“As a rule, every soul of Israel is rooted in the seventy souls of the ‘house of Jacob.’ And the seventy souls of the house of Jacob are rooted in the seventy faces of the Torah.

‘This opposite that G-d made’—in opposition to the seventy souls of the house of Jacob, there are the seventy tongues (of the seventy nations). Each and every tongue has an evil trait unique to itself, which is not found in its fellow, and because of these unworthy traits, they are far removed from the seventy faces of the Torah.

When a soul from the house of Jacob comes into exile under the hand of the seventy tongues—that is, under their evil traits—it screams out seventy cries...”

To explain:

As is known, the very first creation that G-d made was the

holy Torah, which He created in such a manner that it has seventy faces or planes. Regarding each and every face of the holy Torah, it says: “It is longer than the earth in measure, and broader than the sea” (Job 11:9) – each facet contains divine wisdom that is without end.

The Holy One, blessed be He, who desired that the holy Torah be revealed in the world in all of its aspects, *drew forth* from it the seventy souls of the house of Jacob (whose names are listed in Parashat Vayigash entering Egypt), and “arranged” that each soul would grasp a different aspect of the Torah.

From those seventy souls, all the souls of the people of Israel branched out, such that each and every Jewish soul derives its vitality from one of those seventy souls, and since each soul has one particular aspect, it follows that each Jew has a special portion in the Torah that stems from the aspect unique to him...

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov continues:

“It could have been the case that every Jew would automatically merit from birth to grasp the holy Torah (through the aspect that is most appropriate to him), but G-d did not want it to be so. He wanted us to earn the Torah by virtue of our own effort and toil, and therefore, He created obstacles and impediments that prevent people from attaining the Torah; and when they overcome them, they merit to attain the Torah through their own actions.

For the sake of free will and the test, He created seventy aspects of evil, and from each aspect branched off one nation from among the seventy nations (these are the seventy “tongues” that are enumerated in Parashat Noach).

Each nation has one aspect of evil that is unique to it, which no other nation possesses. In other words, each nation is ‘perfect’ in one type of evil...

Then, when it is decreed for a soul to descend to this world, G-d takes it and places it into exile under one of the seventy

**Parshat Naso - Discovering One's Divine Task**

nations—that is, under the bad trait corresponding to that soul's particular Torah aspect. The Jew who is born into a spiritual exile must, over the course of his life, identify the exile he is in and the bad trait that he possesses.

After he has identified it, he must cleanse and purify himself of that trait. When he merits to do so, he will merit his own personal 'Giving of the Torah!'"

Thus, every Jew who wishes to rectify his soul—to merit and to experience an 'experience of life' and a holy perspective from the side of holiness—must first remove the unholy feelings that darken and obscure his own divine vitality..."

**Discovering One's Divine Task**

As noted, this week's parashah — Parashat Naso — that is distinguished by the large number of verses it contains, expresses the process of growth and expansion from a single point into a large and vast expanse.

Meir, our acquaintance from the beginning of the booklet, who was excited by the thought of spending Shavuot in yeshiva, realized that Yossi, who didn't share the same feelings, must be experiencing an entirely different *chavayat ha-chayim* (experience of life).

As the *mashgiach* discussed so many years earlier, each person, according to what he is, experiences life! And consequently, there is no room for questions! These experiences, as one envisions them, are what form life itself.

Finally, let us return to the two verses we set out to explain at the outset.

Therefore, it is specifically this parashah that the Torah chose to teach us the fundamental principle that every soul must internalize: "Each man to his service and burden" (Numbers 4:49) – to teach us that each person is an existence unto himself; each



person has experiences of the soul that are unique to him, by which and through which he draws the Infinite Light, blessed be He, into the world!

Let us conclude with the following insight:

It is written in *HaYom-Yom* (entry for 3 Elul): “The believer in *hashgachah pratit* (Divine Providence) knows that ‘*From G-d a man's steps are established.*’ Every soul has a personal mission, and it is charged with refining and correcting some particular refinement and correction in a certain place.

Only that soul, it alone, can fulfill its mission, and sometimes the matter that requires rectification waits hundreds of years, or even since the creation of the world, for that soul to come and refine and correct it.

That soul as well, from the time it was emanated and created, it too waits eagerly for the time of its descent to refine and correct that which it was charged with.”

Every soul, before descending into this world, spent ‘thousands of years’ with G-d and waited with impatience for its turn to descend to this world. The soul knows well that this world is supremely precious; only in this world can one perform Torah and good deeds and gather endless spiritual pearls and jewels, each person according to his abilities. Then, when the soul's hands are full with the bounty of pearls and jewels it succeeded in gathering in this world, it returns gladly and fulfilled—after many long years—to its Father in Heaven, and, as our Sages have said: “*Happy is he who comes here with his learning in hand*” (Pesachim 50a)...

Since we have been given this wondrous gift—the ability to uniquely fulfill our mission and elevate ourselves—we must not squander this great gift...

May G-d grant us to ascend and elevate ourselves, Amen!

### *Summary and Practical Conclusions*

1. We must know that in every Jewish man and woman there is an essential connection to Judaism, a point of faith (*emunah*), a unique point that no other person besides them possesses. This point that exists in each and every Jew is the point of divine vitality (*nekudat ha-chiyut haElokit*) that resides within them, as we say every morning: “*Elohai, neshamah shenatata bi, tehorah hil*” (“My G-d, the soul You placed within me is pure!”).
2. This G-dly point which shines inside a person has no parallel. None exists like it, nor has there ever been, nor will there ever be! Each and every Jew is special and singular in his uniqueness, and by virtue of his individual point he reveals the Infinite Light of G-d in his own way.
3. In order for a person’s essential point to shine in its fullness, he must dedicate ample time to it and pay great attention to develop and guard it. He also requires divine assistance, that G-d have mercy on him and illuminate his individual point of light.
4. A person must seek out G-d in prayer and engage in Torah study until he merits to attain his unique point. Then he must labor and toil to reveal and draw down that point and good trait within himself that is uniquely his.
5. Every soul has a personal mission, and it is charged with refining and correcting something in a certain place. Only that soul—only it alone—can fulfill its mission. Sometimes the matter requiring rectification waits hundreds of years, or even since the dawn of Creation, for that particular soul to come and refine and correct it.
6. Likewise, that soul itself, from the time it was emanated and created, has been waiting for the time of its descent to refine and correct what it was charged with.
7. Every soul, before descending into this world, spent ‘thousands of years’ with G-d and waited with impatience for its turn to descend to this world. The soul knows well that this world is supremely precious; only in this world can one perform Torah and good deeds and gather endless spiritual pearls and jewels, each person according to his abilities. Then, when the soul’s hands are full with the bounty of pearls and jewels it succeeded in gathering in this world, it returns gladly and fulfilled—after many long years—to its Father in Heaven, and, as our

**Parshat Naso - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

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9. May G-d grant us to ascend and elevate ourselves, Amen!

**Shabbat Shalom!**



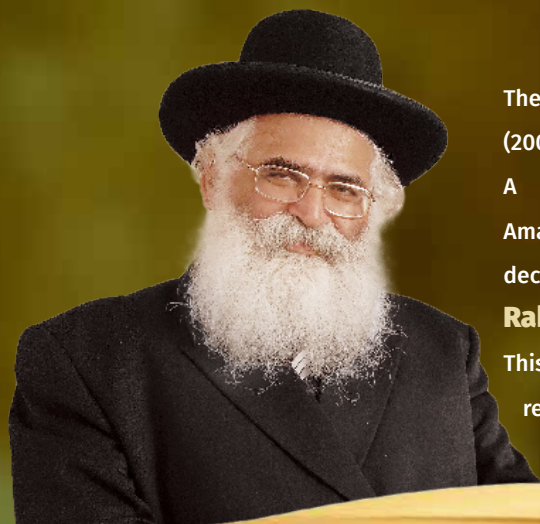
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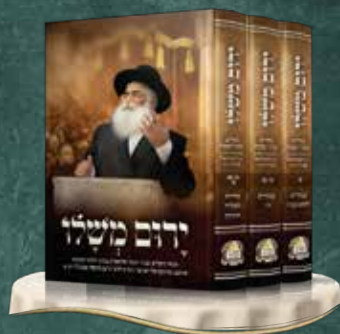


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7th of Sivan ,5786



| City        | Candle Lighting | Shabbat Ends | Rabbeinu Tam |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| New York    | 8:01 pm         | 9:09 pm      | 9:32 pm      |
| Miami       | 7:49 pm         | 8:45 pm      | 9:19 pm      |
| Los Angeles | 7:40 pm         | 8:42 pm      | 9:11 pm      |
| Montreal    | 8:15 pm         | 9:30 pm      | 9:46 pm      |
| Toronto     | 8:32 pm         | 9:44 pm      | 10:03 pm     |
| London      | 8:47 pm         | 10:16 pm     | 10:18 pm     |
| Jerusalem   | 7:18 pm         | 8:10 pm      | 9:04 pm      |
| Tel Aviv    | 7:16 pm         | 8:07 pm      | 9:01 pm      |
| Haifa       | 7:16 pm         | 8:11 pm      | 9:05 pm      |
| Be'er Sheva | 7:14 pm         | 8:08 pm      | 9:01 pm      |

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