

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by **Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman** of the **New West End Synagogue** in conjunction with **Shapell's/Darché Noam Institutions***

PARSHAT NASSO

DVAR TORAH: THE SHINE OF THE TORAH

In the middle line of Birkat Kohanim, “G-d should shine his face on you and show favour to you,” the Sifrei (Midrash on Bemidbar) comments, “This refers to מאור התורה, the shine of the Torah.”

What is the shine of the Torah?

Harav Baruch Epstein, זצ"ל (1860–1941, Lithuania), in his Torah Temimah commentary, notes that this concept appears in at least two places in the Talmud:

“One who sees olive oil in a dream can look forward to מאור התורה, the shine of the Torah” (Berakhot 57a).
“One who is born on a Wednesday will be חכם ונהיר, a wise and shining person.” (Shabbat 156a).

The first (the olive oil dream) statement seems to be in line with another Talmudic statement, “One who regularly uses olive oil can recall something he learned even seventy years earlier” (Horiot 13b). Putting the two statements together – the shine of the Torah refers to remembering Torah, having a powerful memory to hold on to what one learns and the ability to recall that which has been forgotten. Therefore, one who dreams of olive oil can look forward to the shine of the Torah.

Harav Natan of Rome זצ"ל (1860–1941), the author of the Arukh, gives a similar explanation to the second statement: a shining person is one who remembers well.

The second line of Birkat Kohanim, then, according to the Torah Temimah, blesses Israel with Torah’s shine – the ability to remember, to hold on to Torah.

Remembering Torah is apparently more than an intellectual ability. Perhaps remembering Torah indicates internalization of Torah, not allowing Torah to remain detached information. Rather, because a person wants to create a lasting relationship with G-d through His Torah – he takes it into his inner being through constant review. That kind of Torah becomes one with a person until he shines with the Torah’s shine.

We are blessed that the words of the Torah will be constantly clear and shining before our eyes. Retaining is a Divine gift, as the Gemara (Nedarim 38a) says, “At first Moshe would learn Torah and forget it, until G-d gave it to him as a present.” The author of the Torah Temimah (Shemot 31:18) calls attention to the formulation in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Horiot 3:8) that quotes the end of the same statement as – “so the unintelligent will return to the Torah.” They should learn from Moshe’s example and continue to learn despite their limitations, for the Torah is a Divine gift. The Talmud Bavli (Avodah Zarah 19a) likewise says, “One should continue to learn Torah even if he forgets it. . .” We pray that this second blessing of Birkat Kohanim, along with the first and third, and all the blessing of the Torah, apply to all of us along with all of Israel.

SOURCE GUIDE: NASSO → BEHAALOTCHA

The transition from the end of Parshat Nasso to the beginning of Parshat Behaalotcha seems abrupt. The Torah describes the dedication of the Mishkan and lists the sacrifices of each the twelve heads of tribes (Nasso), then shifts to a command about the daily mitzvah of lighting the Menorah. Midrashim and commentators deal with this difficulty. This source guide is built on the Or Hachaim commentary:

A. End of Nasso, Beginning of Behaalotcha

These are the last verses of Nasso and the first section of Behaalotcha:

<p>1. Bamidbar 7:88 – 8:4 (88) The total of cattle for the peace offerings was twenty-four oxen, sixty rams, sixty he-goats, and sixty lambs in their first year. This was the dedication offering for the altar, after it was anointed. (89) When Moshe would come into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the voice speaking to him from the two cherubim above the covering which was over the Ark of Testimony, and He spoke to him.</p> <p>(1) Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, (2) "Speak to Aharon and say to him: 'When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light toward the face of the menorah.'" (3) Aharon did so; he lit the lamps toward the face of the menorah, as Hashem had commanded Moshe. (4) This was the form of the menorah: hammered work of gold, from its base to its flower it was hammered work; according to the form that Hashem had shown Moshe, so did he construct the menorah.</p>	<p>במדבר ז:פח – ח:ד (פח) וְכֹל בְּקֹרֶת זְבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים עֲשׂוּרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה פָּרִים אֵילִם שְׁשִׁים עֶתְדִים שְׁשִׁים כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה שְׁשִׁים זֹאת חֲגֻפַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲחֲרֵי הַמִּשְׁחָה אֹתוֹ. (פט) וּבָבֹא מִשְׁחָה אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת הַקּוֹל מִדְּבַר אֱלֹהֵי מַעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל אֹרֶן הָעֵדוּת מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִּים וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו.</p> <p>(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה יֵאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת. (ג) וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הַעֲלָה נְרֹתֶיהָ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה. (ד) וְזֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמְּנוֹרָה מִקִּשְׁהָ זָהָב עַד יִרְכָּה עַד פְּרֻחָהּ מִקִּשְׁהָ הוּא כַּמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה כֵּן עָשָׂה אֶת הַמְּנוֹרָה.</p>
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B. The Answer in the Midrash and the Or Hachaim's Difficulties

Midrash Tanchuma explicitly addresses the difficulty. Here is the Ramban's version of that Midrash:

<p>2. Ramban's Commentary on Bamidbar 8:2 Why was the passage of the Menorah juxtaposed to the dedication of the Mishkan by the heads of the tribes? Because when Aharon saw the dedication by the heads of the tribes he felt bad that he did not join up with them, neither he nor his tribe. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "By your life, yours is greater than theirs, for you light and prepare the candles every morning and evening." This is a quote from Rashi's commentary, based on a Midrash.</p>	<p>רמב"ן על במדבר ח:ב למה נסמכה פרשת מנורה לחנוכה הנשיאים? לפי שכשראה אהרן חנוכה הנשיאים חלשה דעתו שלא היה עמהם בחנוכה, לא הוא ולא שבטו. אמר לו הקב"ה, "חייך שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות בקר וערב," לשון רש"י ממדרש אגדה.</p>
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Harav Chaim Ibn Atar, זצ"ל (1696-1743), author of the Or Hachaim commentary on the Chumash, asks three questions on the Midrash:

<p>3. Or Hachaim Commentary on Bamidbar 8:2 1. What consolation does this offer for Aharon's bad feeling about the dedication by the heads of the tribes that he did not participate in at all? Lighting the Menorah is not parallel to the dedication?! 2. Why wasn't Aharon set at ease through all of the sacrifices that he does offer – the daily sacrifices, additional holiday offerings, and the incense? 3. Even during the dedication by the heads of tribes, Aharon himself offered the sacrifices; so why did G-d only console Aharon through the Menorah?</p>	<p>אור החיים על במדבר ח:ב 1. מה נחמה זו עושה לחלישות דעתו של אהרן על חנוכה הנשיאים, שלא היה בכלל? הלא אין מעשה המנורה מקביל לחנוכה, גם למה לא הניח דעתו בכל הקרבנות שהוא מקריב, תמידין, ומוספין, והקטורת? 3. גם בהקרבנות החנוכה עצמה של כל הנשיאים הרי הוא המקריב, ולמה לא ריצהו אלא במנורה?</p>
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The Or Hachaim's answer builds on a passage in the Gemara (Menachot 88b) about the daily preparation of the wicks and candles of the Menorah:

<p>4. Menachot 88b What did the Kohen do? He would remove the receptacles, place them in the Temple, clean them with a sponge, place oil within them, and light them.</p>	<p>מנחות פח: כיצד עושה? מסלקן, ומניחן באוהל, ומקנחן בספוג, ונותן בהן שמן, ומדליקן.</p>
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The Gemara identifies this Tannaitic source with the approach that there were separate and independent נרות, receptacles holding the oil and wicks at the top of the Menorah. They were not part of the Menorah itself. These were removed every day, cleaned, set up, and then replaced. (The opposing approach holds that the oil and wicks were placed into receptacles fixed in the Menorah.) There is strong textual evidence, says the author of the Or Hachaim, that these receptacles at the top of the Menorah were distinct, removable units:

<p>5. Or Hachaim Commentary on Bamidbar 8:2 And I say that if I was there I would have discussed this with them and proven from the Tanach that the candles were not fixed in the Menorah ... Another proof is from the following verse in Parshat Bamidbar: "They took an azure colored cloth and covered the illuminating Menorah and its candles and its tongs and shovels and all of its oil containers" (Bamidbar 4:9). This clearly indicates that the candles were not fixed in the Menorah; for if they were part of the Menorah they would not have to be listed (for they would be included in the word המאור). Rather, they were not fixed and therefore needed to be listed along with the tongs and shovels that were independent.</p>	<p>אור החיים על במדבר ח:ב ואני אומר, אילו הייתי שם הייתי מוכיח ודן לפניהם מהכתובים דלא קביעי נרות, ... ועוד ראייה אחרת ממה שאמר הכתוב בפרשת במדבר: "ולקחו בגד תכלת וכיסו את מגורת המאור ואת נרותיה ואת מלקחיה ואת מחתותיה ואת כל כלי שמנה" (במדבר ד:ט). הרי זה מראה באצבע שאין הנרות קבועים, שאם לא כן הרי הנרות בכלל המגורה הם, ולא היה צריך לפורטם, אלא ודאי שאינם קבועים, ולזה הוצרך לפורטם כמלקחיה וכמחתותיה שהם בפני עצמם.</p>
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C. The Or Hachaim's Solution

This leads us to an explanation of how the daily lighting of the Menorah consoled Aharon more than any of the sacrifices he offered or would later offer:

<p>6. Or Hachaim Commentary on Bamidbar 8:2 Based on this we can understand Hashem's intent when he responded to Aharon. For Aharon was distressed over not having participated in the dedication of the altar. Hashem responded to him, "By your life, yours is greater than theirs ..." This means that the daily involvement in the Menorah – removing the candles, placing them in the Temple and cleaning them – is like making the Menorah anew every day. Each time he lit it, Aharon rededicated the Menorah.</p>	<p>אור החיים על במדבר ח:ב וכפי זה נשכיל כוונת תשובת ה' לאהרן. כי אהרן היה מתאנח על חנוכת המזבח, והשיבו הקדוש ברוך הוא "חיך שלך ..." פירוש, מעשה המגורה שמוריד הנרות ומניחן באוהל ומקנחם, וחוזר ובונה אותם מחדש ומדליקה, הרי הוא כל יום כעושה מעשה חדש, שמחנך הוא המגורה בכל הדלקה והדלקה.</p>
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The Nesiim dedicated the Mishkan on the 1st through 12th of Nisan; but Aharon Hakohen – and Kohanim for all generations – rededicated the Menorah in the Mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash every day.

D. Two More Solutions and Another Direction

1. The Ramban's (more well-known) solution is that Aharon's descendants, Matityahu and his sons, had the merit of dedicating the Temple in the Second Temple period, graced by the Chanukah miracle with its miraculous lasting candles. That dedication lasted for all generations through Chanukah candles.
2. Another Midrash (Tanchuma Behaalotcha 3) compares describes the candle-lighting as a special dedication of the Temple for Hashem's beloved Leviim. Hashem waited specially for Aharon and the Leviim.
3. Harav Yosef Zev Lipovitz, זצ"ל (1889-1966), in his Nachalat Yosef commentary, points out that after the end of Parshat Nasso which caps off the dedication of the Tent of Meeting, the lighting of the Menorah was the inaugural mitzvah, the very first mitzvah Moshe was commanded in the Ohel Moed.

THE DANGER OF EXPOSURE BY RABBI ELIE SILVERBERG

Parshat Nasso includes the passage about the sotah, the unfaithful wife, and that of the nazir, who, among other things, must abstain from wine for at least thirty days. Rashi quotes the Gemara in Masechet Sotah (2a) that asks why the Torah juxtaposes the section about the nazir to the section about the sotah. The Gemara answers that one that sees the sotah in her state of disgrace shall deny himself wine by becoming a nazir, since excess wine intake leads to immorality.

At first glance, this answer seems strange. I would have thought seeing the sotah in her state of disgrace, and knowing that excess wine intake leads to this state, would itself discourage the observer from excess wine drinking. Why would one need to take on nezirut, which includes a vow to abstain from wine?

From here we gain a tremendous insight into the human psyche. When a person sees something bad, and even knows what led up to this event – rather than the gravity of the event turning off the observer, the exposure to the event and its cause makes the observer even more vulnerable. He is also now in danger of becoming ensnared by a similar circumstance.

Such is the power of the evil inclination. One who encounters a sotah-like situation needs to guard himself by fleeing spiritually in the opposite direction, as by taking the oath of the nazir.

A friend of mine, Rav Moshe Stahl, used this principle to answer a question I asked him. The question was: Why didn't Miriam merit entering Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Yisrael? We know that Moshe and Aharon didn't go in because of the sin at Mei Merivah. But what did Miriam do such that she too was not allowed to enter Eretz Hakodesh, the Holy Land?

Rav Stahl suggested the following answer: We know it was the Cheit Meraglim, the Sin of the Spies, which led to the generation that left Egypt not being allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael. Right before the story of the spies in Parshat Shelach is the episode in Parshat Behaalotcha where Miriam speaks lashon hara (negative speech) against Moshe Rabbeinu. The spies were exposed to the sin of lashon hara. And even though they saw she was punished, lashon hara entered into their psyche. Hence, Miriam had an indirect hand in the sin of the spies. On her level of righteousness, this was enough to be held accountable and not be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael.

In today's world we are exposed to many bad things. We need to actively fortify ourselves spiritually in order to not be adversely affected by these events.

שבת שלום ומבורך

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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