

# KushnerComments

## Parshat Naso

Friday, May 25, 2018

יב סיון תשע"ח

From the Lower School

1. What are the names of the three major families of Shevet Levi?
2. Which two groups of people have to live outside of the camp of Bnei Yisrael?
3. What is the name for a person who does not drink wine or get haircuts?
4. Who brought gifts for the Mishkan on behalf of their Shevatim?
5. How many days did it take to bring all of the gifts?

— Rabbi Aron Srolovitz — JKHA Assistant Principal  
Answers can be found on the last page.

From the Middle School

### Unconditional Love

The ultimate parenting guide is given to us in this week's Parsha. Parshat Naso has within it the ברכת כהנים, from which Rabbi David Fohrman teaches us some valuable parenting advice. It is therefore an appropriate ברכה for parents to give to their children on Friday night and/or Yom Kippur. He points out that there are three stages of the relationship between a parent and a child, corresponding to the three פסוקים that are included in ברכת כהנים. The first stage is that of nurturing and protecting. This is connoted in the verse יברכך ה' וישמרך. Every parent's primal instinct is to protect and nurture their child. It begins in

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## From the Middle School

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the womb and continues throughout the parent's life. The next stage is unconditional love. This is the love that a parent has just by seeing the child. It is the *פניו אליך ויחנך*; *יארה* that you just look at them and they find favor in your eyes. The most difficult stage is the third. That is, when a child does something that is disappointing to a parent. In this case, even though it may be difficult, the relationship needs to stay, with *שלום*. We say, *ישארה*, *פניו אליך וישם לך שלום*. Sometimes (and I am being generous), a child won't do things exactly the way a parent would like. In these instances, it is important for a parent to step back and demonstrate that the relationship is still there, even though the child may have done something to disappoint them. This is a *ברכה* that the *כהנים* give us in our relationship with Hashem. We hope that he will protect and nurture us, love us unconditionally, and maintain His relationship with us, even if we do things to disappoint Him. However, it is also a guide for us in how to be the best parents we can be. We should all strive to nurture and protect our children to the best of our ability, love them for who they are, and maintain that relationship no matter what mistakes they make.

— Rabbi Adam Hertzberg — JKHA director of academic affairs

## From the High School

### Embarrassing Others

In this week's *parsha*, *Naso*, we see the words "*V'hishbia ota hakohen*," "the kohen shall make her take an oath" (*Bamidbar* 5:19). According to Rashi, this *passuk* teaches us that two women may not drink the *sotah* waters at the same time. If a woman drinks the *sotah* waters and has not committed adultery, she will not be harmed; rather she will receive great blessings from it. The *gemara* explains this is because perhaps the first woman has not truly committed adultery and therefore will quickly agree to drink the *sotah* waters, knowing that she will receive a *bracha* from them. However, the second woman who did commit adultery may see the other woman so confidently declare her innocence and become too embarrassed to admit

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## From the High School

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her guilt. She then may proceed consequently to drink the *sotah* waters even though she knows it will lead to her gruesome death. Rabbi Moshe Kormornick of *The Short Vort* explains that with this ruling the Torah stresses how far someone will go to avoid embarrassment. If this is true, how much further should we go in order to avoid embarrassing someone else?

One of the most famous modern stories related to this topic includes one of the greatest rabbis of the twentieth century, Rav Moshe Feinstein. One afternoon, Rav Feinstein was being escorted to his driver's car after leaving yeshiva. After the car had pulled away and was a significant distance away from the yeshiva, Rav Moshe let out an agonizing cry. His driver immediately pulled over the car to address the situation. He looked back and saw Rav Moshe holding his fingers in immense pain. Unbeknownst to everyone at that time, one of Rav Moshe's students had closed the door on the Rav's hand. However, Rav Moshe held in his pain in order not to embarrass his student. "Could you imagine that poor student's pain if he would have known what he had done to me?" Rav Moshe explained. From here we see not only the great importance of not embarrassing someone else, but also the greatness of Rav Moshe, whose natural instinct to cry out in pain was overruled by what was clearly an even stronger "natural instinct" not to embarrass a fellow Jew.

- Tommi Ratzker is a Freshman at RYKHS

### Understanding The Nazir

The Torah world is one that generally does not shun the material world. In fact, we have many mitzvot that use physicality as a means of connecting to Hashem. We say kiddush on wine for Shabbat; we buy beautiful sets of lulav and etrog for Sukkot; we bring our first fruits for *bikkurim*. It is easy to list many practices of Judaism in which we engage with the physical world and sanctify it, thus recognizing Hashem's role as creator of our beautiful world. And yet, in *parshat Naso* we encounter the laws

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of a *nazir*, a man or woman who seems to withdraw from the physical world, as the *nazir* does not consume grapes or alcohol, does not cut one's hair, and does not become *tamei lamet* (ritually impure from having contact with the dead.) How do we reconcile this figure with our general philosophy?

Of course, there is not a single approach to this question, and the Rambam and the Ramban take opposite views as to whether the *nazir* is ideal or problematic. The Ramban sees the *nazir* as the most perfect way of dedicating one's self to Hashem, and he points out that the Torah states regarding the *nazir*, "*kodesh hu laHashem*," "he is sanctified to God" (*Bamidbar* 6:8). In his commentary, the Ramban explains that the only reason that a *nazir* must bring a sin offering at the close of his or her nazirite period is because it would be more fitting for the person to remain a *nazir* forever! The Rambam, however, sees the sin offering as proof that in fact, it is a sin to be a *nazir*. In *Hilchot Deiot* 3:1, he compares the nazirite ways to the ascetic practices of some other religions and he calls this an evil path.

While I of course cannot claim to have a better understanding than the Ramban or the Rambam, after learning each of their compelling understandings, I can only conclude that both contradictory positions hold essential truths: First, the Rambam's insistence that we as Torah Jews must live in this world, elevating the physical through the dedication of our actions and engagements to God, and second, the Ramban's assertion that we must act with self-discipline. Perhaps each method applies to different times and circumstances, but they are both necessary for the refinement of ourselves, so that we may work to develop into true *ovdei Hashem*, servants of God.

- Mrs. Norma Mintz — HS, Tanach Chair and Girls Israel Guidance

### Answers to questions on page 1

1. Gershon, Kehat and Merari
2. People who are *zavim* or have *tzara'at*
3. A *nazir*
4. The *nesi'im*
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