

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Naso

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This issue of Toronto Torah is a half-issue due to Shavuot.  
We look forward to returning with a full issue next week!

### Live, Love, and Prosper

Rabbi Steven Gotlib

The Talmud (Megillah 32b) writes that Parshat Bechukotai is read before Shavuot so that the curses recorded within it are read at the end of the year. For the same reason, we read the rendition of the curses in Parshat Ki Tavo before Rosh Hashanah. Thus, the new year can be started without them. A mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:2) clarifies that Shavuot is, in fact, considered the new year – more precisely, the day of judgment - for fruit of the tree, and therefore the same rule applies.

Rabbi Baruch Simon (*Imrei Baruch: Bamidbar*, Naso 1) quotes from the Kozhiglover Rav, Rabbi Aryeh Tzvi Frumer, that Parshat Naso is specifically read immediately after Shavuot in order to start the new year with the blessing of *birkat kohanim*. [Rabbi Frumer also writes that the same idea underlies reading Parshat V'zot HaBerachah around Shemini Atzeret, which is understood as the closing of judgment from Rosh Hashanah.]

In our parshah (Bamidbar 6:23), Hashem commands Moses to “speak to Aaron and his sons: Thus shall you bless the people of Israel,” thus establishing the mitzvah of *birkat kohanim*. Before its recitation today, a blessing is said in praise of Hashem, “Who has sanctified us with the sanctity of Aaron and commanded us to bless His people Israel with love.” Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (Magen Avraham OH 128:11:18) notes that its very unusual to end a blessing with “with love,” and he suggests that the reasoning may be based on the Zohar (3:147) which says that any kohen who is not merciful to his

people and whose people are not merciful to him should not perform this mitzvah. Those who recite *birkat kohanim*, therefore must love (and be loved by) the Jewish people whom they are blessing.

This idea is further expanded in the name of Rav Simcha Bunim of Gur (*Sefar Pardes Yosef HaChadash*, Naso). Rav Simcha Bunim writes that Jews are able to be closer to Hashem than angels because Jews can experience G-d after reciting only two words (*Shema Yisrael Hashem...*) while angels only experience Him after three (*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh, Hashem...*). kohanim, however, are the closest since they experience Him after only one word (*Yivarechecha Hashem...*). The catch is that experiencing Hashem as a kohen comes in the context of blessing the entire Jewish people. Without a sense of love and compassion for his fellow Jews, a kohen is unable to recite *birkat kohanim* and therefore cannot get close to Hashem.

The centrality of love for all Jews for kohanim is consistent with the words of Hillel (Pirkei Avot 1:13): “Be like the students of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving mankind and drawing them close to the Torah.” When one loves peace, they pursue bringing more of it into the world. When one loves another human being, they seek to bring completeness into their lives through the light of Torah. Likewise, a result of loving G-d is wanting to spread Torah and to seek to sustain the world He created by maximizing peace throughout society. To be a kohen is to be a student

of Aharon in the truest sense, blessing the people of Israel towards peace. But that can only be done when their money is where their mouth is. A kohen who does not love his community and is not loved by them cannot say *birkat kohanim* because they are not a genuine representation of what it means to be a kohen in the first place.

We need not all be kohanim (though I happen to be one) in order to love peace, pursue peace, love our fellow humans, and bring them closer to Torah and mitzvot. Just as Shavuot is the new year for fruit, it is also a new opportunity for us to take an accounting of the fruits of our Torah learning. As a result of what we've learned in the past year, have we grown in our love of Hashem, love of Torah, and love of the Jewish people?

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When Yotam ben Uziyahu was king of Yehudah, Retzin, king of Aram, joined forces with King Pekach ben Remalyahu of Yisrael to fight against Yehudah. This created great fear among the residents of Yehudah. [7:1-2]

Hashem ordered Yeshayahu to go to Achaz and tell him not to fear these two smoking stubs of firebrands, because they wouldn't succeed. They were called "firebrands" because firebrands only produce smoke but don't create a real fire. (Metzudot) Although they were hoping to conquer Jerusalem and appoint Ben Taval to be king, they would not succeed. The reason they wouldn't succeed is because in another 65 years the northern kingdom of Yisrael would cease to exist as a people and would be exiled. Aram, too, would not be successful. [7:3-9]

Hashem then ordered Yeshayahu to approach Achaz again and ask him if he wanted a sign to prove that indeed his enemies would fail. However, Achaz

wasn't interested in testing Hashem. Nevertheless, Yeshayahu provided a sign. He spoke of a pregnant woman – possibly his wife, possibly the wife of Achaz – who would give birth to a child named Emanuel. In Emanuel's youth, these kings would already be defeated. However, bad days would come upon Yehudah as well; the king of Assyria would attack and succeed [7:10-17].

Yeshayahu then described what would happen when Assyria attacked. The enemies - Assyria and Egypt - will be plenty and painful, like flies and bees. There will be so many enemy soldiers that they will have to find places to rest even in uncomfortable places like clefts of rocks and thornbushes. [7:18-19].

However, eventually, in the future [the time of King Chizkiyahu], Hashem will get rid of the enemies and there will be a time of blessing and plenty in Israel. The prophet describes two goats producing so much milk that the people

can make butter and other dairy products. They will have plenty of crops and plenty of wine, but they won't use the wine since it will be a righteous generation - the generation of Chizkiyahu - and they will learn Torah. (7:20-25)

**Insight**

Yeshayahu tells us that the name of the puppet whom the kings of Aram and Israel wish to appoint in Jerusalem is Ben Taval. Professor Amos Chacham (Daat Mikra, Yeshayahu) suggests that he is named only under the name of his father to indicate that he doesn't have any personal value and accomplishments other than being the son of his father. We see in other places in Tanach that this was a way to show disrespect to someone; for instance, when King Saul pursues David he calls him "son of Yishai". [See Shemuel I 20.] This teaches us that one should strive and hope to achieve personal accomplishments and not rely only on the accomplishments of his ancestors.

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**Monday-Thursday**

**10-Noon: Seder Boker, R' Moshe Yeres, ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/sederboker>, at Yeshivat Or Chaim as of Wednesday (men)**

**Shabbat June 10-11**

**After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT: Gruda Beis Medrash (men)**

**After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah**

**Sunday June 12**

**9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, The Torah of Rav Shagar, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)**

**Monday June 13**

**8:45 AM Idan Rakovsky, Likutei Moharan of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)**

**2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Song of Songs, ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/idanrak> #1 of 5**

**7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong>**

**Tuesday June 14**

**1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc, Shaarei Shomayim & ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>**

**7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 14-15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)**

**Wednesday June 15**

**6:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, Shaarei Shomayim**

**10:00 AM R' M Torczyner, When will the Messiah come? Yeshivat Or Chaim / ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> #1 of 2**

**7:45 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Laws of Shabbat, Shaarei Tefillah— note new time**

**Thursday June 16**

**9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Mei haShiloach, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)**

**1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 25), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)**

**7:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Time-Bound Mitzvot #2, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)**

**Friday June 17**

**10:30 AM R' J Anstandig, R' M Torczyner, R' Y Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2, Yeshivat Or Chaim/ <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>**