

*SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 14 Sivan 5786.
Corresponding to May 30, 2026*

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 586 Hz) (p. 814 S) (p. 527 Hi) (p. 748 AS)

NASO נשא

Numbers 4:21

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),
Rabbi Emeritus

Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. "Take a census of the sons of Gershon, as well..." (4:22). What is the clause "as well" adding to the verse? They took a census of Kehat at the end of last week's Parshah, but Gershon is the oldest of the three Levitical families, the three sons of Levi. Therefore, telling us "as well" was a statement that counting Kehat first was not an attempt to degrade Gershon to second place. Kehat was counted first solely due to Moshe and Aharon being from that Levitical family, and secondly because the job of Kehat was to carry the holiest utensils of the Mishkan as they traveled through the desert. Counting Gershon "as well" was a decisive attempt to consider Gershon as being counted "first" along with his Levitical brother, Kehat.

2. "Everyone who comes to perform services (work) of a work..." (4:47). What is service of a service? It hardly makes any sense. Rashi comments that this was musical accompaniment. Rashi's source is the Talmud (Arachin 11a) where this verse was explained as "work" done to enhance the service of the sacrifices. In the Talmud, our Sages quote many sources for this enhancement. Commentators offer a number of reasons for the unusual power of music and song. It drives away depression. One who is happy develops better self-esteem; song can elevate the soul to levels of prophecy. Song inspires us to ascend from the mundane world in which we live to the Heavenly Residence of the Creator. What our Sages derive from here is that every sacrifice had to be accompanied by music. The music of the Holy Temple was, we believe, quite simplistic, various chords, nothing elaborate: no melody, no harmony. Through the centuries, our music became more powerful and meaningful. Sefer Chassidim wrote that we should select melodies that are sweet and pleasant, and apply them to our Tefillot, to our prayers.

3. The Sotah is a perplexing law because it is asking Hashem to intercede and decide a private matter between a husband and a wife. This law of a "suspected adulteress" teaches us how important the relationship between the husband and wife actually is. The ordeal involves scraping the ink off a page of the Torah, including erasing the name of Hashem. Hashem forgoes His Kavod, His Honor, and allows His Name to be erased to reach a divine resolution to a private issue. What a powerful statement. Suppose it is Shabbat Chanukah and a person only has enough oil for either the Shabbat lights or the Chanukah lights, which does he light? Based on the laws

of Sotah, it would appear that Shabbat takes precedence, since the Shabbat candles represent Shalom Bayit, the endearing relationship between husband and wife. Chanukah is to publicize Hashem's miracles for the Jewish people. Hashem forgoes His Honor in order to concentrate on the Shalom Bayit, the love and harmony between the husband and wife.

4. The Nazir was a person who wished to elevate himself spiritually. So he needed to accept certain prohibitions: not to eat or drink any grape products, not to shave or get a haircut, and not to defile himself by being in contact with a dead body. I would not have expected these three prohibitions. I would think to prohibit marital relations, and not eating meat would be more appropriate. But I guess that I need to analyze what the Torah is saying. The Nazir is more likened to a Kohen and to a mourner, who must give up some of the physical luxuries in life and focus on his plight in life. The prohibition of drinking wine is intriguing because the prohibition is limited to wine, but not to other intoxicating beverage. He is allowed to drink bourbon and scotch, for example. More could be written on the subject. (RED)

5. When the Kohanim ascend the Bimah to bless the people with the Priestly Benediction, they are required to say these blessings in a loud voice. If they do not, they are not fulfilling the Mitzvah (Beit HaLevi). Saying it quietly is not sufficient. (The Netziv states that the same Halachah of saying it in a loud voice applies as well to the Jewish farmer when he brings his Bikkurim and makes his National Jewish declaration of Arami Oved Avi.) The Beit HaLevi recognizes that the requirement of "out loud" depends on the size of the Shul and how large the crowd is. Just as there is a requirement of the Kohanim facing the crowd and similarly the crowd must face the Kohanim in order to create a connection between the two groups, so too the requirement of "out loud" serves the same purpose, to create a connection. [RED's note: When we duchen in the Sephardi Minyan, with about 60 participants. The Kohanim do not have to be so loud. But in the main Shul, the Kohanim need to project in order to fulfill the Mitzvah.]

6. In the Tosefet Berachah, the Torah Temimah records that a Kohen is privileged to raise both hands when giving the Priestly Blessing. Hence when we parents bless our children on Friday night, only Kohanim raise both hands. Therefore, when I bless my children and grandchildren on Friday night, I raise only one hand. To illustrate this point, the Torah Temimah cites an incident when the Vilna Gaon was under the Chuppah at a wedding, and he blessed the young couple with the Priestly Blessing and raised only one hand and placed it on the groom's head. [RED's note: I did a wedding some years ago and I co-officiated with a Reform Rabbi. I would not allow him to say any of the blessings during the ceremony. He said that is okay. But he added that it was his custom to bless the young couple with the Priestly Blessing under the Chupah. I allowed him

to do so. After the ceremony, I was approached by several Orthodox guests and asked whether it was kosher to do Priestly Blessings under the Chuppah; that it was not the Orthodox way of doing a wedding. I told them about the Vilna Gaon. If it was good enough for the Gaon, then it should be good enough for us.]

7. The Midrash relates that Moshe was reluctant to accept the voluntary gifts of the twelve tribal princes in the dedication ceremony of the Altar in the Mishkan. After what happened to Nadav and Avihu, one can see why Moshe was worried. The Midrash continues to tell us that Hashem reassured Moshe that the gifts were pure, heartfelt, and acceptable to the Almighty. The incident of Nadav and Avihu would stay with Moshe and Aharon and all of Israel forever. It is impossible to know which gifts are acceptable and which voluntary actions might kindle God's anger with a donor, no matter what the donor's intentions were. Better to act cautiously than to assume that Hashem would be pleased. The gifts of the tribal leaders were completely acceptable. Even the wagons and oxen were accepted. Moshe would give the wagons and oxen to the Levitical families on the basis of Moshe's considering who needed those gifts more.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT NASSO 5786

I. From the Text

1. What did the Gershonite Levitical family carry from the Mishkan? (4:25...)
2. How many working Leviyim were there, transporting the Mishkan? (4:58)
3. What will happen to a Suspected Adulteress who was innocent and went through the Sotah ordeal? (5:28)
4. What are the three prohibitions that a Nazir had to observe? (Chapter 6)
5. What is the last blessing that the Kohanim give us? (6:26)

II. From Rashi

6. How is it possible that a Jew could have no relatives at all? (5:8)
7. In what way will Hashem bless you, in the first blessing of the Birkat Kohanim? (6:24)
8. Why did the princes make their gifts before anyone else in the dedication of the Altar? (7:3)
9. What else did each prince give to the festivities, besides what was in each wagon? (7:10)
10. When the princes gave, was the gift from each one of them personally or from each tribe? (7:12)

III. From the Rabbis

11. When Hashem assigned the Levitical family of Kehat their job in transporting the Mishkan, Hashem addressed Moshe and Aharon. When He assigned Gershon and

Merari, Hashem addressed only Moshe. Why did He not include Aharon? (Or HaChaim, Abravanel)

12. In what language must the Priestly Blessings be given? (Mishnah)
13. Where is the Blessing of Peace applied? (Ktav Sofer)

IV. Midrash

14. What law do we derive from about a married woman from Parshat Sotah (a suspected adulteress)?

V. Haftorah. Judges

15. From which tribe was Samson?

VI. Relationships

16.
 - a) Seth - Enosh
 - b) Cham - Cheit
 - c) Rachel - Orde
 - d) Amram - Yocheved (2 answers)
 - e) Putiel - Pinchas

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT NASSO 5786

1. They carried all the curtains and coverings.
2. 8,580.
3. She will have a baby.
4. He is forbidden to eat or drink grapes or grape products. His hair may not be cut. He may not become impure.
5. Peace.
6. If he is a convert.
7. With an increase in your material wealth.
8. The princes did not give immediately when there was an appeal for the construction of the Mishkan.
9. Each prince donated the wagon also.
10. From each prince personally.
11. Because only with Kehat were the Kohanim involved, since they needed to prepare the holy artifacts for travel via the Leviyim. Here, the Kohanim were not needed; hence Aharon was omitted.
12. In Hebrew.
13. In the family, in the nation (of Israel), and in the world.
14. That each married woman should cover her hair.
15. Dan.
16.
 - a) Father Seth.
 - b) Grandfather Cham
 - c) Grandmother Rachel
 - d) Husband-Wife. And Aunt Yocheved.
 - e) Grandfather Putiel