

June 5 - 11, 2022 ו' - י"ב סיוון תשפ"ב



טָה בַּפָּאָרָשָׁה

In This Week's Parashah

Moshe completes the count of the families from the tribe of Levi.



We hear a series of rules that might seem random. One thing they have in common is they all connect to כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests).

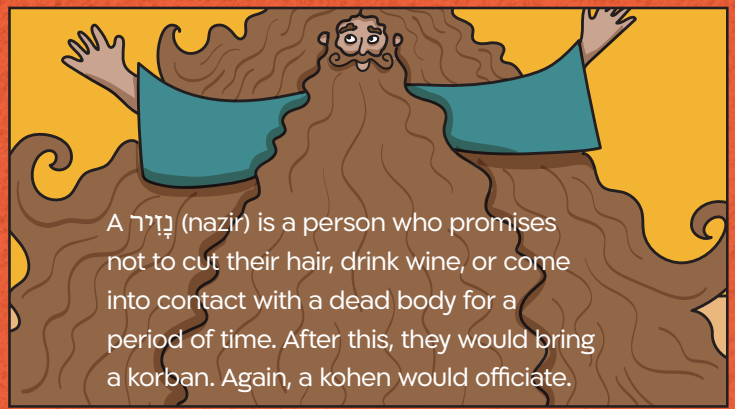
Benei Yisrael must keep their camp free of טִמְאָה (tum'ah, impurity). Kohanim would help diagnose and purify people who experienced this.



If someone made a false oath they would bring a sacrifice called a קֶרְבַּן אֲשָׁם (korban asham) to a kohen.



A נָזִיר (nazir) is a person who promises not to cut their hair, drink wine, or come into contact with a dead body for a period of time. After this, they would bring a korban. Again, a kohen would officiate.



Kohanim are commanded to bless Benei Yisrael by reciting three special pesukim called בִּרְכַת כֹּהֲנִים (Birkat Kohanim).



The נָשִׂיא (nasi, chief) of each שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) brings an elaborate offering to the mishkan. Each day for 12 days straight, one nasi would bring a gift of silver and gold objects, flour, spices, and animals. Now the mishkan is fully stocked and ready for operation!





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The נְשִׂיָּאִים (nesi'im, chiefs) were the heads of each tribe. In our parashah, they have the special honor of bringing gifts to the mishkan.



Bemidbar 7:2

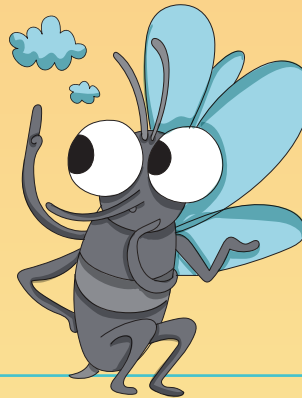
The nesi'im, the heads of the houses, drew near—**these were the nesi'im of the tribes, these were the ones in charge of enrollment.**

במדבר ז:ב

וַיִּקְרִיבוּ נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאֵשֵׁי
בֵּית אֲבוֹתָם הֵם נְשִׂאֵי הַמַּטֹּת הֵם
הָעֹמְדִים עַל-הַפְּקָדִים:

The second half of this pasuk sounds like it's telling us: Remember these nesi'im? You know them!

So... who were they?



Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are bugged by something unusual in the Torah text

Sifrei Bemidbar 45

These are the people who were appointed over Benei Yisrael in Egypt, as it says, "the shotrim (overseers) of Benei Yisrael were beaten" (Shemot 5:14).

ספרי במדבר

הֵם שֶׁהָיוּ מְמַנִּים עֲלֵיהֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וַיִּכּוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"
(שמות ה:יד).

Remember the shotrim? Back in Parashat Shemot, when Benei Yisrael were slaves in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt), Pharaoh made their lives miserable by cutting back on their supplies, but still making them produce the same amount of bricks. When Benei Yisrael failed to do this, the shotrim were the ones who suffered. Here's what the midrash in Shemot has to say about the shotrim:



Shemot Rabbah 5:21

"The shotrim of Benei Yisrael were beaten" - this teaches us that they were pious and sacrificed themselves for the people, and suffered in order to make it easier for everyone else. This is why the shotrim deserved to be rewarded with a spirit of prophecy.

שמות רבה

"וַיִּכּוּ שׁוֹטְרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" -
מִבְּאֵן אֲמָה לָמַד שֶׁהָיוּ בְּשָׂרִים
וּמְסָרוּ עֲצָמָן עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְסָבְלוּ
מִכּוֹת בְּדֵי לְהַקֵּל מֵעַלֵיהֶם,
וּלְפִיכֵן זָכוּ לְרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ.

- ♦ Why would the former shotrim deserve to be appointed as nesí'im? What can we know about them from their actions?
- ♦ When you think about leaders, what qualities come to mind? Do you usually associate leadership with protecting weaker people? How are these connected?



Send us your thoughts or questions from learning the parashah. We'll write back to you, and some will get published in future issues of Devash!
Write to us at devash@hadar.org



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

When someone decides to become a נָזִיר (nazir), they take on extra restrictions, beyond the usual rules of the Torah. They are not allowed to drink wine, or cut their hair, or become טָמֵא (tamei, impure) by coming in contact with a dead body.

You might wonder: Is it good to be a nazir? Is the Torah recommending this?

Two teachers in the Talmud—who both happened to be named Elazar!—discuss this question (Taanit 11a).

Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: What does the verse mean (Bemidbar 6:11), “and the nazir will atone for sinning by the soul.” How does the soul of a nazir sin? By causing distress when avoiding wine.

We can conclude: If a nazir is called a sinner for causing self-distress simply by avoiding wine, someone who causes self-harm by avoiding other forms of joy unnecessarily should definitely be considered a sinner.

רבי אלעזר הקפ"ר ברבי אומר, מה תלמוד לומר (במדבר ו:יא), "ובכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש", וכי באיזה נפש חטא זה? אלא שציער עצמו מן היין.

והלא דברים קל וחומר: ומה זה, שלא ציער עצמו אלא מן היין — נקרא חוטא, המציער עצמו מכל דבר ודבר — על אחת כמה וכמה.

Rabbi Elazar says: If you accept a fast upon yourself you are called kadosh (holy). This is what it says about a nazir (Bemidbar 6:5), “shall be kadosh, with the locks of the hair grown long.”

We can conclude: if a nazir, who cuts out one thing (wine), is called kadosh, then someone who cuts out even more things should definitely be considered kadosh.

רבי אלעזר אומר: נקרא קדוש, שנאמר (במדבר ו:ה), "קדוש יהיה גדל פרע שער ראשו." ומה זה, שלא ציער עצמו אלא מדבר אחד — נקרא קדוש, המציער עצמו מכל דבר — על אחת כמה וכמה.

- The first Rabbi Elazar (HaKappar) quotes a pasuk about the nazir needing God's forgiveness. He assumes that the forgiveness is for the sin of having been a nazir. But is it possible that forgiveness could be for something else? If so, what?

- Sometimes, it's hard to know how far to take something. We know the Torah's laws and rules make us holy. But does that mean that adding on more rules along the same lines makes you even more holy? Can you make the case for both sides of this argument?





הַלְכָּה • Halakhah

God commands Aharon and his descendants to bless Benei Yisrael using these three pesukim:

Bemidbar 6:24-26

May God bless you and protect you.

May God show a bright face to you and be gracious to you.

May God lift God's face toward you and grant you peace.

במדבר ו:כד-כו

יְבָרֶכֶה ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ:

יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחַנֶּה:

יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשֶּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

This mitzvah is called **בְּרִכַּת כֹּהֲנִים (Birkat Kohanim, Priestly Blessing)**.

Before giving the **בְּרִכָּה (berakhah, blessing)** to the community, the kohanim recite this berakhah:

Blessed are You, God our Lord, ruler of the world, Who has sanctified us with the holiness of Aharon and commanded us to bless the people of Israel with love.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּקֹדְשׁוֹ שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן
וְצִוָּנוּ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּאַהֲבָה.

Since Birkat Kohanim has to be **בְּאַהֲבָה (be-ahavah, with love)**, if a kohen is having a conflict with anyone in the community, and they feel they can't have completely loving intention, they should leave the service before Birkat Kohanim (Mishnah Berurah 128:37).

The Gemara offers details about how and when it should take place (Talmud Bavli Sotah 38-39):



- ◆ Back in the Beit Ha-Mikdash, in Birkat Kohanim they used a really long and special name for God that we don't even know how to say anymore.
- ◆ In our synagogues today, Birkat Kohanim happens during the repetition of the Amidah, after the blessing that expresses our wish for a return to the Beit Ha-Mikdash service.
- ◆ Kohanim wash their hands and remove their shoes before Birkat Kohanim.
- ◆ Birkat Kohanim is only recited in Hebrew.

Kohanim keep their hands raised opposite their shoulders, with their palms facing the ground. If you're on the receiving end of Birkat Kohanim, it's not appropriate to look directly at the kohanim, but it's also rude to turn away from them. So people face the kohanim, but look downward, often covered with a tallit.

In many communities outside Israel, Birkat Kohanim is only recited on holidays. Some Sephardic communities outside of Israel do Birkat Kohanim daily, based on the opinion of the Beit Yosef (Orah Hayyim 128).



רְגִיעַ שֵׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Bemidbar 4:25

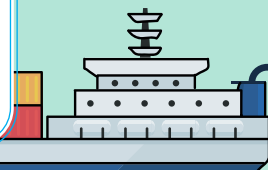
They shall carry the curtains of the mishkan and the Tent of Meeting—its covering, and the covering of tahash skin that is on top of it, and the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

במדבר ד:כה

וְנָשְׂאוּ אֶת-יְרִיעַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן
וְאֶת-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד מְכַסְּהוּ וּמְכַסְּהָ
הַתַּחַשׁ אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו מִלְמַעְלָה
וְאֶת-מָסַךְ פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

לְשֹׂאת (שָׂרַשׁ נ.ש.א.)
◆ To carry (laseit)

= אֲנִיַּת מַשָּׂא
Cargo ship
(onyat massa)





דְּקָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּ • One-Minute Debate

How to play:

Here is a topic for debate along with some suggested arguments, but feel free to come up with your own.

- ◆ Assign people to the "Agree" or "Disagree" sides.
- ◆ Each side gets 30 seconds to make their case.
- ◆ At the end, the group votes on a winner.

Debate: Making a promise to be good is a positive thing to do.



Agree!

- ◆ Promising to do something shows that you take it seriously. It makes you accountable, more than just thinking or saying that you'll do something.
- ◆ When you are able to keep a promise, it feels really good.



Disagree!

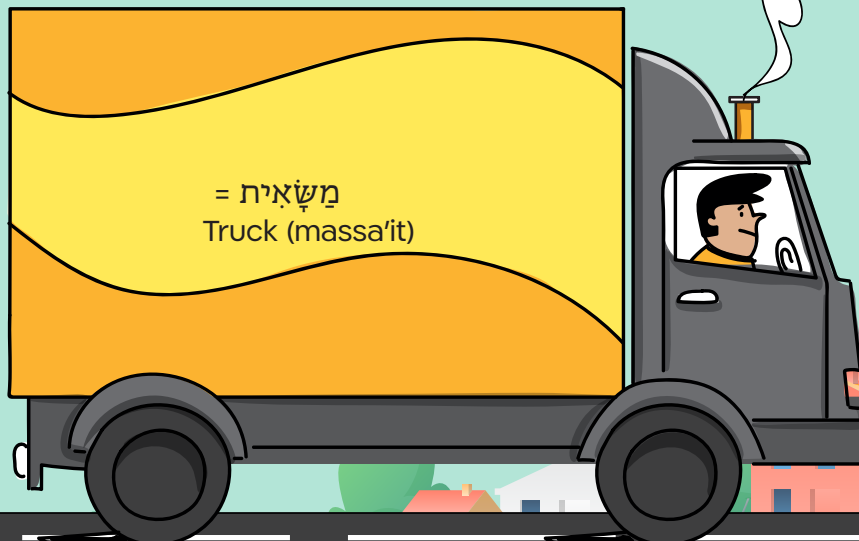
- ◆ Promising sets you up to fail! What happens if you can't deliver on the thing that you promised?

→ = מִנְשָׂא
Baby carrier
(minsa)

= מִתְנַשֵּׂא
1. Arrogant
(someone who sees
themselves as above
others)

2. To rise up (like
smoke or like a
mountain)
(mitnasei)

= מַשָּׂא
Load, freight,
burden (massa)



= מַשָּׂאִית
Truck (massa'it)

Find the Word!

In Parashat Mishpatim, the Torah says that if you see your enemy's donkey having trouble carrying its heavy burden, you should help. Can you find that mitzvah, which includes this שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root)? (Hint: See Shemot chapter 23.)



שאלות השבוע • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. **The answers to the last three are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah.**

aliyot:

- 1) Bemidbar 4:21 to 4:37
- 2) 4:38 to 4:49
- 3) 5:1 to 5:10
- 4) 5:11 to 6:27
- 5) 7:1 to 7:41
- 6) 7:42 to 7:71
- 7) 7:72 to 7:89

Good luck!

1 Which part of the שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) of Levi was responsible for carrying the curtains of the mishkan?

2 How many members of Shevet Levi were counted, from the ages of 30 to 50?

3 When a person does something wrong to someone else, what's the first thing they are supposed to do to make it better?

4 For which relatives is a נָזִיר (nazir) allowed to become impure?



5 How many wagons did the family of Merari get?

6 How many shekels of silver was the bowl brought by each shevet?

7 What was the total amount of silver brought by all the shevatim?

8 Which two names of God appear in the names of the chiefs of the shevatim?

9 Did a shevet bring gifts to the mishkan on Shabbat?

10 Naso is the longest single parashah in the Torah. How many verses does it have?

*
Look for the answers on page 12!





Munah L'garmeih מְנַח לְגַרְמֵיהוּ



When you first look at it, this note just looks like another munah! But actually, munah legarmeih is a munah followed by a dividing line after the word. Legarmeih means "by itself" because this note makes the munah its own sound, a bit separate from what comes after. This only happens a handful of times in each parashah. And it really changes the tune! Most people sing this as a quivering note that sounds very unique. You can find them scattered throughout the Torah, but our parashah has quite few. Usually, a munah legarmeih is followed by another munah and then a rev'i'i, like this:

במדבר ז:ז

אֶתְּוּ שְׁתֵּי הָעֲגָלוֹת

Bemidbar 7:7

The two carts



But sometimes it is just followed directly by a rev'i'i, like in this phrase, which comes up 12(!) times in our parashah:

both filled

שְׁנֵיהֶם מְלֵאִים



Try to listen for this special note getting repeated over and over!



QUICK FACTS

1

How many times does it appear in the Torah?
283—Unusual

2

Does it end a musical phrase?
Yes

3

Is it above or below the word?
Below

4

Where is it placed on the word?
On the accent/the end



בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

This week's פְּרָשְׁנוֹת/Commentary section (p. 3) features a special kind of argument called a קַל וָחוֹמֶר (kal va-homer). In English it's sometimes translated "all the more so," or in Latin (if you want to impress your friends), "a fortiori." A kal va-homer compares two different cases:

IF it's forbidden to steal \$1 →

THEN kal va-homer it's definitely forbidden to steal \$1,000

The kal va-homer says that if something is true in the קַל (kal, light) case, then logically it should also be true in the חוֹמֶר (homer, heavy) case. Here are some examples from Jewish texts:

IF a nazir (who just gives up wine) is a sinner →



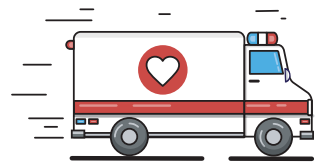
THEN kal va-homer someone who gives up more pleasures is a sinner (Ta'anit 11a)



IF circumcision is a minor medical procedure that doesn't save a life, and you can do it on Shabbat →



THEN kal va-homer you can do any medical procedure to save a life on Shabbat (Yoma 85b)



IF God is pained by the suffering of the wicked →



THEN kal va-homer God must be pained by the suffering of the righteous (Hagigah 15b)





מי היו הגְּמָיִינוּ • Who Were Our Sages?

Featured in our פְּרָשְׁנוֹת/Commentary section this week is Rabbi Elazar HaKappar (p. 4). He is one of the last Tannaim, Sages of the Mishnah, from about 1,800 years ago. Our tradition says very little about him, and we are not even totally sure if his name was Elazar or Eliezer.

But among archeologists, he's popular! He is one of the only rabbis from the time of the Mishnah who has an archeological record. In the Golan Heights, a big stone that was probably part of a door was found—about 1,500 years old!—and it has this written on it:

זה בית מדרשו שהלרבי אליעזר הקפר

This is the beit midrash of Rabbi Eliezer HaKappar

This stone is from hundreds of years after Rabbi Elazar died, so it's not really clear what they mean when they say that this is "his" beit midrash. Maybe it's like naming a building after someone famous in the past, like naming a science building "Einstein."

In a midrash (Avot deRabbi Natan 26), Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says, "Do not be like the upper part of a doorway, which no person's hand can reach." He was making a point about being humble and accessible. Pretty cool that his name was found on a doorway all these years later!





מה זָה • What's Going On Here?

Our parashah introduces בִּרְכַת כֹּהֲנִים (Birkat Kohanim), the special formula for Aharon and his descendants to use for blessing Benei Yisrael. At the end of the section about Birkat Kohanim, God says, וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי אֲבָרְכֶם (And the kohanim will place My name upon Benei Yisrael, and I will bless them).

Who is “them”? Who will God bless? It’s a debate in the Talmud (Hullin 49a).



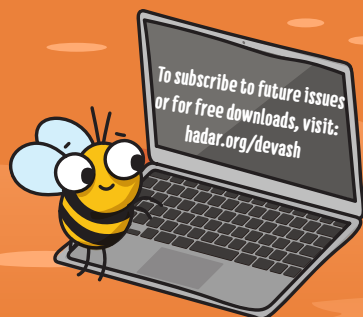
Rabbi Yishmael says “them” means the kohanim. God blesses them directly, and then they pass that along to Benei Yisrael.

Rabbi Akiva says “them” means Benei Yisrael. Benei Yisrael’s blessing doesn’t actually come from the kohanim. They ask God to bless Benei Yisrael, and God blesses Benei Yisrael directly.



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The clan of Gershon (4:25)
2. 8,580 (4:48)
3. Confess (5:7)
4. None! (6:7)
5. Four (7:8)
6. 70 (7:43)
7. 2,400 shekels (7:85)
8. אֱלֹהִים (El) and שְׁדַיִם (Shaddai)
9. They must have! Moshe was told נָשִׂיא אֶחָד לְיוֹם נָשִׂיא אֶחָד לְיוֹם (one chief should present a gift each day, one day after the other; 7:11), and there were 12 chiefs, so that had to include a Shabbat. There’s a midrash (quoted in Da’at Zekeinim on Bemidbar 7:48) that it was Efrayim who brought the gift on Shabbat. Can you guess why? Take a look at Bemidbar 7:48.
10. 176. These verses contain 2264 words and 8632 letters! (Average length of a parashah is 108 verses.)



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