

parashas  
**Naso**

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P E R C E P T I O N S

Nachshon, the son of Aminadav of the tribe of Yehudah offered on the first day, He offered one silver dish ... (Bamidbar 7:12-13)

THE REDEMPTION BEGINS on Pesach, but it ends on Shavuos.<sup>1</sup> This is another reason we read Megillas Rus on Shavuos, which documents the origin of Dovid HaMelech, ancestor of Moshiach Ben Dovid. And even though Pesach is called “Zmar Cheirusainu,” the “Time of our Freedom,” it is with respect to the luchos that it says:

The Tablets are the handiwork of God, and the script was God’s script engraved—charus—on the Tablets. Do not read “charus,” but “cheirus”—freedom. For, you can have no freer person than one who engages in Torah study. (Pirkei Avos 6:2)

Torah, therefore, is our ticket to freedom. Pesach sets

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<sup>1</sup> Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 1, Drush 6, Siman 4, Os 13, Os Katan 5.

it all in motion, but it is Shavuos that “punches the ticket,” so-to-speak. Unless a person is involved in Torah, they cannot achieve TRUE freedom.

This means more than just doing mitzvos or learning Torah. A person needs both, and to the extent that they have both, that is the extent to which they are free:

Rebi Yosi said, “Whoever says that he has no [desire to study the] Torah, has no [reward for the study of the] Torah”

Is this not obvious?

[This must be the meaning]: Whoever says that he has only [an interest in the study of the] Torah has only [reward for the study of the] Torah.

This, however, is also obvious!

But [the meaning really is] that he has no [reward] even [for the study of the] Torah.

Why? Rav Papa answered: “The verse says, ‘That you may learn them and observe to do them’ (Devarim 5:1): whoever is [engaged] in observance is [also regarded as engaged] in study, but whoever is not [engaged] in observance is not [regarded as engaged] in study...” (Yevamos 109b)

Because this year was a leap year, and we only celebrate one day of Yom Tov in Eretz Yisroel, we read Parashas NASO before Shavuos. Diaspora Jews however are a week behind, and will be reading BAMIDBAR before Shavuos, and only see THIS parsha sheet after Shavuos.

In a sense, it doesn't really matter because the message is just as applicable after Shavuos as it is in advance of Shavuos. When it comes to Torah, you have to walk the

walk, not just talk the talk. And that does not only mean doing the mitzvos, but doing them as if they REALLY matter to you. Doing the mitzvos habitually is also only called “talking the talk.”

This parsha has what to say about this as well. At the end of the parsha, we are presented with the gifts brought by the princes of each tribe in honor of the initiation of the mizbayach–altar. And the interesting thing about it is, that the Torah relates what each prince brought as if each one was different from the others, even though they were EXACTLY alike.

The Torah does not repeat itself unless there is something to learn. It could have easily taught that all the princes brought the same thing in one paragraph. It would have saved parchment, ink, and reading time, significantly shortening the longest parsha in the ENTIRE Torah.

The Torah repeated each inauguration offering because each one WAS different, not by virtue of WHAT was brought, but by virtue of HOW the offering was brought. It was the SAME offering brought in 12 DIFFERENT ways, making the point that the “same thing” can be different when the person doing it is different.

This is why it never gets old. How many times have we dovened Shacharis, Minchah, Ma’ariv, Mussaf, etc. The text never changes, but the prayer does EACH time, because each time WE are different. We’re not the same person we were yesterday, or even this morning. We’ve changed, if only a little bit.

A person can treat themselves as if they are exactly the same, as if nothing ever changes. They can doven Shacharis today the same way they did yesterday, and Minchah, and Ma’ariv as well. They can treat their rela-

tionship with God like a desk job, the kind you show up to day-after-day because you HAVE to. Nothing much changes, and you just do what you have to keep your employer happy enough so that he doesn't fire you.

Not much of a life, which is why so many people, even religious ones, have to find “outside” activities to keep themselves sane. NOT being religious is out of the question for them. Growing in religion is not on their radar. So they just settle in on some level of quasi-Torah observance. Not exactly the idea of freedom the Torah had in mind, or is “engraved” on the luchos.

Pesach pointed us in the direction of freedom. Shavuot teaches us how to achieve it through the learning of Torah. But it won't happen automatically, of course. You can get into a car, but unless you drive, it won't take you ANYWHERE. You have to start the engine, step on the gas, and steer the car. How much more so is this the case with Torah.

Happy—and FREE—is the person who breathes fresh life into every mitzvah they do, and treats it like it is brand new. Then they can HAVE Torah, and the higher reality of life to which it provides access.

## *A Little Perspective, #4* *Erev Shavuot Thought*

I WOULDN'T HAVE thought it so, but it seems that, though you can take the boy out of sports, you can't take the sports out of the boy.

I grew up playing sports every chance I could. I played many of them, sometimes even competitively. But the pleasure came from just the playing of them, and that healthy feeling you had after you did.

If you play sports, you tend to follow them too. However, I never really seriously played basketball, and therefore I never really followed it either, even after my original town—Toronto—got their own NBA team. This was especially so because I live in Israel, completely away from that world.

This year, the Toronto Raptors not only made it to the playoffs, they have made it to the finals of the NBA as well. I know this because others told me, and then because I saw it in one place or another while googling or something.

I still don't watch the games, and won't. I still love sports, especially the exercise part of it, but my lifestyle (and community) doesn't really support a sports life. Besides, I don't have much time for it anyhow, and I use a treadmill instead. I also walk several times a day between my desk and the kitchen fridge. (The problem is what I come back with.)

But to my surprise, I am excited about the Raptor's wins, and disappointed by the losses. It's not the team, but the city they play for, the one in which I was born and grew up. I had a good life there, and the connection still remains with me, even many years after leaving. I don't enjoy going back for visits. I simply LOVE Eretz Yisroel.

With Shavuot coming up, and being fascinated with the Raptor's effect on my life, I came to an interesting realization. If I can have such a subliminal loyalty to my city of origin just because I grew up there, shouldn't I have an

even stronger one to Torah, which was taught to me in its entirety while I was still in the womb? Torah is my TRUE place of birth.

This would mean that, although you can take the Jew out of Torah, evident by the horrific assimilation and intermarriage rate. But you can't take the Torah out of the Jew, because it was planted there before birth. It is not just a PART of our soul. It IS our soul.

This is why so many Jews find their way back to Torah, against great odds. Why against great odds? Because they seemed to be so distant, and maybe even anti-Torah at one point. I certainly was, and so were many of my religious friends as well.

It turns out though that such Torah negativity is only skin deep. On a soul level, we LOVE Torah, and identify with it. And Shavuot is the time of year that we are supposed to realize this, and take advantage of it. That is the REAL "home team" that we are rooting for, and want to "win."