

The Land of Israel in the Parsha & Our Lives

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Naso

What is the Connection Between External Order and Fulfilling our Inner Mission?

What is Preferable: External Order and Stability or Inner Warmth and Care?

I grew up in a highly functioning, law-abiding country where all the external frameworks operated like clockwork. The streets and sidewalks were clean, green, and beautifully maintained; the public systems – from libraries to healthcare – were well-funded and reliable. In fact, I recently noticed that according to U.S. News & World Report, Denmark ranks #1 in the world for quality of life, based on education, healthcare, political transparency, economic security, and general societal well-being. Growing up in such an efficient and stable environment should have brought a deep sense of contentment. Yet, I never felt truly fulfilled in what might be called ‘The Dreamland of Denmark.’

Despite its polished exterior and near-perfect punctuality – where trains always arrive precisely as announced – something essential was missing. I find myself far more at home in a land of constant challenge and unpredictable rhythms. Even during times of conflict and uncertainty, I choose to live in Israel – a place bursting with soul. While Israel may lack the external order of Denmark, it overflows with purpose, connection, and vibrancy. Yes, I may have to stoop to pick up stray candy wrappers on the sidewalk – a sight unimaginable in suburban Denmark – but I do so with joy, knowing I walk streets rich with meaning, history, and heart. A society may be perfectly orderly on the outside yet lacking in inner meaning and mission. In Israel, it’s not about appearances – it’s about essence. The laughter of children, the warmth of strangers, and the shared sense of mission here speak to something far deeper than surface-level perfection ever could.

Why Does Parashat Naso Mention the Suspected Adulteress, the Nazarite, and the Thief?

Parashat Naso seems to continue the national themes introduced in *Parashat Bamidbar*: the census of the tribes, the inauguration of the Mishkan, and the offerings of the tribal leaders. While reading HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein’s article, *The Embedded Message*, on *Parashat Naso*, I was struck by his observation that even within the structured and clearly defined national order of the wilderness journey – with its census, banners, and division of Levitical roles – the Torah does not lose sight of the moral and spiritual development of the individual. Interwoven in this narrative are seemingly personal and unrelated topics – the thief who confesses and repays (*Bamidbar* 5:5-10), the suspected adulteress (5:11-31), and the Nazir who abstains from wine and seeks higher holiness (6:1-21). Why are these inserted here, interrupting the flow of collective preparation for the sanctification of the Mishkan and entry into Eretz Yisrael?

Precisely because the Torah is teaching us that a nation’s spiritual destiny is only as strong as its individuals. In the midst of grand national missions – the revelation of the Shechinah in the Mishkan, and the historical march into the Land – the Torah zooms in on personal struggles: betrayal, longing, inner restraint, and restitution. The message is clear. The sanctity of the Mishkan depends not only on the proper placement of tribes or ritual service, but on the moral integrity of each individual. Without a foundation of personal fidelity, integrity, and spiritual yearning, the collective cannot sustain its calling.

The Torah thus ensures that no soul is forgotten. The lonely convert, the wayward woman, the aspiring ascetic – each has a place in the unfolding destiny of Am Yisrael. A society striving for holiness must care not only for its national structure but also for its moral fiber, woven one soul at a time.

What is the Ideal Relationship between Outer Details and Inner Refinement?

The ultimate goal is a radiant soul in a healthy body on both an individual and a national dimension. We

don't have to sell ourselves short, we can aspire toward the highest spiritual content encased in the most organized external parameters. For any community to thrive, we need law and order. Role divisions need to be clearly defined, and all community members must carry out their responsibilities and know who to turn to for questions and directions. *Parashat Naso* highlights the meticulous arrangements needed for the Israelites' journey on their way to settling in the land. It provides details about preparations for entering the Land of Israel, particularly focusing on the organization of the camp and the Levites' responsibilities in carrying the holy vessels. When it comes to the G-d given mitzvot, even physical structures and external order become spiritual and infused with inner meaning and mission. The many details and even repetitions of the sacrifices of the princes of each tribe become infused with meaning, as they are intended not only to provide the external particulars but to teach us an inner lesson about character development.

Parashat Naso is the longest parasha in the entire Chumash because it repeats word for word the offering of each of the tribes instead of just paraphrasing that all the tribes offered the exact same such and such. This demonstrates that although the princes brought the same precise offering, none of them copied their friend. Each had his own personal relationship with his offering. Because of each tribe's original intention, excitement, and awareness, the Torah described each of their offerings in its own section. Another reason for the repetition of the tribal sacrifices word by word is due to Hashem's great pleasure with their identical offering of unity that rectified the sibling jealousy of Kain and Hevel. When external details are infused with inner refinement, then even otherwise tedious repetition becomes meaningful.

How Do We Carry the Sanctuary Within Our Unique Spiritual Mission?

The census in *Parashat Naso*, which continues the census begun in *Parashat Bamidbar*, moreover alludes to the inner spiritual intention within the exterior positions and roles. The designated roles of the families within the tribe of Levi in carrying and assembling the Mishkan hint at how each family had a unique portion of the holy structure to bear upon their shoulders, not just physically, but also spiritually.

במדבר פרק ד פסוק מו

מִן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וְעַד בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה כָּל הַבָּא לַעֲבֹד עֲבֹדַת עֲבֹדָה וְעֲבֹדַת מִשָּׁא בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

"From thirty years old and up to fifty years old, all who come to serve the service of service and the service of carrying in the Tent of Meeting" (*Bamidbar* 4:47).

While *Ha'amek Davar* emphasizes the transition from supernatural guidance in the wilderness to a more hidden Divine providence in the Land, *Parashat Naso* moreover suggests that the service of carrying the Mishkan was not merely a physical duty – it was a spiritual apprenticeship. This desert service trained each individual to become a vessel for the Shechinah – a sacred preparation for dwelling with Divine presence in Eretz Yisrael. Each person had their role, their burden, and their sacred responsibility – just as each soul in Eretz Yisrael today has a unique spiritual mission to carry.

The *Sefat Emet* explains that just as each angel has a unique root and mission, so too each member of Am Yisrael longed to know their soul's root and place of rectification. Though we cannot see this with our physical eyes, through the Torah, each person can find their spiritual origin. Some rare individuals may ascend entirely through their deeds, but even those who are not on that level can leap beyond their natural rung through longing and will alone. "Each man by his camp and under his banner" represents this dual path of fixed service and spiritual aspiration. In this way, every individual's unique role in the camp mirrors their deeper mission in the Divine structure of the nation, especially as it manifests in the holiness of Eretz Yisrael (*Sefat Emet*, *Bamidbar*, year 5639).

Carrying Our Sacred Responsibility in the Land

The Levites carried the Mishkan in the desert. Today, we carry the sanctity of the Land in our own way. Living in *Eretz Yisrael* is not always easy – there are physical challenges, bureaucratic obstacles, and moments of loneliness. But just as each Levi had to bear his assigned portion – whether it was the heavy planks, the shimmering curtains, or the sacred vessels – each of us carries our piece of the collective inheritance.

Living in Bat Ayin, we can perceive how every soul brings a different panel, a different curtain, a different vessel to the collective sanctuary of our people. Each student who comes to learn Torah, plant a garden, raise children, or simply breathe in the holiness of the Land is carrying their part of the Mishkan – their *avodat hakodesh*. Each of us, with our unique contribution and role in the community, reflects our deeper spiritual mission, aligned with our soul's root and place of rectification within the Divine structure of the nation.

It is not coincidental that we read *Parashat Naso* immediately following the reception of the Torah. The word נָשָׂא/*Naso* means “to carry.” After receiving the Torah, we carry the responsibility to live by it. We can choose to relate to the Torah as a cumbersome burden – or walk our path here with *kavanah* (intention), recognizing that we carry more than physical burdens: we uplift and reveal the holiness embedded in the world.

Just like the *Levi'im*, we may not always see the full picture of the sacred dwelling we are assembling. But with each step, each mitzvah, and each choice to live a life of holiness here in *Eretz Yisrael*, we make space for the Shechinah to dwell once more in our midst.