

Garden plays a strategic role in re-establishing the connection the Holy One has had in His Mind from the Beginning. He said on the sixth day of Creation Week: ***Let us create man in our own image;*** He isn't backing off of that one iota. He will have a man – indeed a powerful contingent of men – who will bear that image. It is just a matter of time – and protocol! The invitation to reconnect with our highest and best state – *i.e.* as close confidantes of and faithful co-laborers with the Most High - is always open, to anyone who will commit to make their life about doing the following three things:

1. *sh'ma-ing* His Voice;
2. *sh'mar-ing* His Covenant [*i.e.* cherishing and honoring/preserving and adhering to the blueprint He has drafted for the maximalization of human life on earth], and
3. *asah-ing* His *mitzvot* [*i.e.* building what He says to build, and nothing else – and doing the building He calls for according to His schedule, His specifications, His priorities, His timing, and His protocols]. See **Exodus 19:5-6** (the tower of Babel); cf. **Genesis 11:4 ff & Exodus 32:1 ff** (Golden calf). See also **Micah 6:8**.

***Learning to Overcome the Distractions of our Flesh
and Silence the Destructive Disingenuity of Our
Fruit-of-the-Tree-of-Knowledge-Corrupted Pseudo-Intellects***

All who accept the Creator's invitation to return to covenant with Him are empowered to silence the Serpent's voice at every crossroads of decision. Each of the covenant extensions/expansions described in Torah is designed to help us overcome a different obstacle the Serpent has thrown in our paths. In Covenant, our Creator becomes our constant Companion, our faithful Mentor, and our eminently-trustworthy Guide. For that reason we do not have to be subject to the limits of either [a] our age, [b] our culture, [c] our biological genetic profile, [d] our education and life experience matrix. We no longer have to be bound by:

1. the restrictions of our personal frames of reference;
2. the tyranny of our fleshly desires, urges and appetites;
3. our unenlightened attitudes;
4. our uninformed opinions;
5. our critically flawed education;
6. our lack of cross-generational perspective or experience;
7. our natural talents and intelligence;
8. our flawed capacities of reason and logic.

Through the covenant, its extensions and its expansions, a miracle of the highest

[Exodus 6:3-8]; *the Sinaitic Betrothal Covenant Extension and Expansion* [Exodus 19:3–Numbers 10:10]; 4. *The Davidic Covenant Extension and Expansion* [I Samuel 16:1-13 and II Samuel 7:8 -17]; 5. *The Solomonic Wisdom Covenant Extension and Expansion* [I Kings 3:3-15]; and, 6. *The Renewed Covenant Extension and Expansion* [Jeremiah 31:27–40; Ezekiel 36:22-38, and Isaiah 60:1–62:12].

magnitude happens. We mortal, fallible, flesh-obsessed, and often petty and ignorant human beings can actually engage in meaningful communications, enjoy transformative interactions, and develop a deep, purposeful, collaborative relationship with our Eternal, Immortal, Infallible, and Omniscient Creator. In the context of the Covenant framework the Holy One has established we can actually [1] overcome and transcend our fallen state, [2] learn to *think significantly higher thoughts than our natural minds could ever think*, [3] *speak powerful words with the weight of His Glory instead of the stench of our own flesh*, [4] learn to *develop beautiful and inspiring relationships* with one another, and [5] *engage in kind, patient, and long-suffering courses of conduct that will demonstrate to the world what the Kingdom of Heaven looks like when lived out on earth in real time by real people*. The Edenic covenant and each extension and/or expansion of it provide us all the enablement we need to live out of *Divine Encounter*, in *Divine Empowerment*, under *Divine Direction*.

Covenant Essential #1: Divine Encounter

The overcoming-and-transcending approach to life that our Bridegroom-King has designed for His Bride-People to live is not *a self-improvement program*. It is not a pathway to nirvana, utopia, or It is not a creed. It is not a *religion*. It is not a belief-system. It is not a set of principles. It is not a *moral compass*. It is not a theological framework. It is not a movement. It is not anything any human being – even the strongest, most moral, most honest human alive - can just decide to ‘give a good try’ and hope to pull off. Embarking on our Bridegroom’s pathway is not something a person can muster up strength to do in order to *please a loved one*, to *feel good about being part of a social-justice movement*, or to *be thought of as a ‘good person’*. Nor was the King’s Covenant Way ever intended to serve as *a program of discipline* that humans could embrace in for the purpose of: 1. escaping eternal suffering in someone’s ‘*Dante’s Inferno*’ concept of what Catholicism calls ‘Hell’, or 2. earning any kind of reward - either in this age or in the World to Come. The King’s Way is not found in any earth-based organization or institution; nor is it accessible through any such organization’s mailing or product list.

What then is the essence and substance of the King’s Covenant Way? The Covenant lifestyle is designed to be a Walk in the Garden with a beloved Mentor. The journey to which the Holy One has called us through His Covenants begins, ends, and depends entirely upon us entering into and maturing in relationship with Him. It is all about the pleasure of our Mentor’s Companionship, and *the joy of bonding with Him*. It is all about *watching Him, having real, honest, two-way conversations with Him*, and gradually improving, through trial and error, in our quest to perceive, to speak into, and to engage with real-life situations, challenges, relationships, and opportunities the way He does. It is all about learning to *trust a*

very real Divine Persona – the Bridegroom-King Himself, as our Trustworthy Guide, our Perfect Father-figure, our Highly Skilled Shepherd, our Extravagantly Generous Benefactor, and our Ever-Patient and Inspiring Personal Trainer.

Without the essential foundation of a growing relationship with the Creator of the Universe, there is no such thing as *Torah lifestyle* - only the deceptive illusion thereof. Through the arm of the flesh and the power of the fallen mind some have developed a form of man-made, intellect or service based religion that incorporates part of Torah for validation, and have called it a Torah lifestyle, but it is anything but. Calling a pig a rose will not change its smell. Calling a thorn a powder puff will not heal the wound the thorn causes. Every willpower-driven or intellect-motivated approach to Torah will degenerate quickly into a hard, cold, form of religion having neither substance, power, nor redemptive effect.

Divine Encounter is the *sine-qua-non* of the Hebraic approach to life, of the Torah lifestyle, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. Avraham lived according to Divine Encounter³, as did Yitzchak and Ya'akov. Ditto for Moshe, Y'hoshua, Sh'muel, David, Sh'lomo, Eliyahu, Elishahu, Yeshayahu and the other prophets. Divine Encounter is also what awakened, motivated, and directed the followers of Yeshua. All of these, one by one, learned to *hear* – and *be stirred and moved by* – the Bridegroom-King's Beautiful Voice. In none of these situations did covenant precede, Divine Encounter. In each case covenant faithfulness followed – and was fueled by – Divine Encounter. That is the way it must be. Yeshua described the relationship we must have to make the Torah meaningful as that of a Shepherd and His sheep: ***the sheep sh'ma His voice: and He calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he brings out His own sheep, He goes before them; and the sheep follow Him, for they know His Voice.*** John 10:3(b)-4. Do we really think it is possible that it could be different for us? No, Dear Reader. As it was for our patriarchs, prophets, and forebears, so it is for us. As go our conversations and interactions with the Holy One, so goes our lives. Our Bridegroom-King's Voice has to become more real to us than the other voices

We have to *know* the Holy One in a real and meaningful way – or all the Torah study and talk and all the *halakah* we practice quickly becomes just a game we

³ The God-Encounters of Avraham described for us by Torah number *ten*. They are: **1. The Glorious Calling to Be a Transcender [Genesis 12:1-3], 2. The Promise of Eternal Ownership of the Land of Kena'an [Genesis 12:7], 3. The Promise of Specific Legacy [Genesis 13:14-17], 4. The Blessing of Melki-Tzedek [Genesis 14:18-20]; 5. The Promise of a Bodily Heir and a Great Future Redemption [Genesis 15:1-27]; 6. The Promise of Fatherhood Extending to Many Nations [Genesis 17:1-22]; 7. The Promise of Cross-Generational Impact [Genesis 18:1-33]; 8. The Promise of Healing for the Nations [Genesis 20:17-18]; 9. The Promise to the Seed of the Bondwoman [Genesis 21:12-13]; and 10. The Promise and Ultimate Example of Substitutionary Atonement [Genesis 22:1-18].**

play in our minds. We have to *bond with a very real Shepherd-King*, or saying we are walking in Covenant is just a low-level virtual reality experience. We have to interact with Him as a real Master in a real, not theoretical way. We have to talk to that Master regularly and meaningfully in real words, about real-life subjects. Repetition of religious clichés and formulized prayers and wrangling over abstract theological concepts will kill us – and do no favors whatsoever to the people or the world around us. All the Holy One’s Covenant manifestations therefore assume - and require – intimate interaction with and apprenticeship to the Holy One Himself – every day, in ordinary life contexts, not just in religious services.

Do you want Divine Direction for your life? Do you want Divine Empowerment for your mission? These do not come through education or experience. These do not come through the exercise of human logic, reason, theology, or *halakah*. Divine Direction and Divine Empowerment come only through Divine Encounter. They only come from Him. And they can be appropriated only through Encounter with Him. You cannot ‘earn’ a Divine Encounter. You cannot ‘force’ a Divine Encounter. But you are encouraged over and over again to *pray humbly* for one⁴. The Bridegroom-King never disappoints those who humble themselves before Him. He never refuses those who seek Him earnestly. Just remember that whenever the Holy One visits you, speaks to, or moves upon you, be sure to do whatever He says to do, go wherever He tells you to go, and receive and embrace whatever He offers to give you or promises to do concerning you. In the visitation comes the empowerment you will need for the journey.

Covenant Essential #2: Divine Empowerment

The Holy One does not visit the sons of men just for entertainment. He steps out of eternity into time and out of invisibility into manifestation to awaken, to call, to commission, to equip, and to empower. To accomplish this He employs three critical tools: His Words, His Breath, and His Touch.

A. *The Creative Empowerment of Divine Speech*

The Holy One created the Universe with the words of His Mouth. **Psalm 33:6**. From the moment He drew His Breath and said ‘*Yehi Ohr*’ [Light Be!] it has been so. The Creator speaks ... and things happen. That is the way it has been from the beginning, and that is the way it will always be. His words do not return to Him void, but accomplish whatever He sent them to do. **Isaiah 55:11**. That is why if we will only shut out other voices, and *delight in* and *meditate upon* Divine Utterances [for example, **Genesis 12:1-3**, **Exodus 6:3-8**, **Exodus 19:4-6**, **Exodus 20:1-17**, and **Leviticus 19:1-37**], we cannot help but become like a tree planted by the river of living water,

⁴ See e.g. **Deuteronomy 4:29**; **Amos 5:4**; **Psalm 105:4**; **Proverbs 8:17**; **Isaiah 55:6-7**; and **Jeremiah 29:13** and **50:4**.

and bring forth fruit in season. **Psalm 1:2-3.** There is amazing power in the words of the Holy One. That is the reason the Divine Discourses of Torah are so invigorating, inspiring, and empowering – especially when they are read, studied, considered, and discussed at length, in long periods of intimate conversation, with the One Who spoke them. Do not even consider trying to live a Torah lifestyle without spending significant time reading, studying, and meditating on His Word. Consider the cry of the Psalmist:

My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.

[Psalm 119:28, 105, 133]

B. The Transformative Empowerment of Divine Breath

Inseparable from and working cooperatively with the Creative Power of Divine Speech is the Directive Power of the Ruach – *i.e.* the Divine Breath. Starting with Genesis 1:2 and proceeding through the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, and the *B'rit Chadasha*. See especially Genesis 2:7, Exodus 35:30-35, II Samuel 23:2; Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 11:2-3; Isaiah 61:1 ff, Ezekiel 36:27 and 37:5-14; Joel 2:27-28; and Acts 1:8.

Stop right now, Dear Reader, and pray passionately that the Holy One will breathe His own life force into you. Pray that you will be transformed by the Encounter. And pray that the empowerment of His Breath will never lift off of your life. See Psalm 51:10-13, where David taught us to pray:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

C. The Directive Empowerment of the Divine Touch

Another way the Holy One can provide the empowerment for Covenant living is through the Touch of the Master's Hand. See Exodus 33:22-23; Psalm 39:7-10; Proverbs 21:1; Ezra 7:6, 9-10 & 27-28; Ezra 8:31; Isaiah 41:13-14, Ezekiel 1:3, 3:14, 8:1, 33:22, 37:1, and 40:1; and I Peter 5:6. When the Holy One reaches forth His Hand to touch a human being, the human being is never the same. Dear Reader, please seek the touch of the Master's Hand. May your prayer be:

*Oh ... that Your hand would be with me,
and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!*

[I Chronicle 4:10(b)]

Covenant Essential #3: Divine Guidance

Living out of the empowerment of the Covenants of the Bridegroom-King requires us to recognize, receive, embrace, and follow Divine Guidance. We are not to follow the way that ‘seems right to a man’ – that always leads to death. **Proverbs 14:12**. Like the Psalmist, we are to diligently seek the leadership of the Holy One, saying frequently:

*Lead me, O Holy One, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.*

Lead me in paths of righteousness for Your Name’s sake.

*Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.*

*Teach me Your way, O Holy One,
and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.*

[Psalm 5:8; Psalm 23:4; Psalm 25:5; and Psalm 27:11]

The Fresh Encounter That Kicks Off Parsha Naso

We are not to prepare to leave Sinai – or for that matter any way station along the journey of life - based upon a body of knowledge or a data base of experience we have obtained heretofore. We need a fresh Divine Encounter. And the Holy One knows that – and desires it – far, far more than we do. Hence, as our appointed time of critical transition nears the Creator the Universe steps out of eternity and invisibility and speaks to Moshe face-to-face. The Great Bridegroom-King carries on a conversation with the prophet as a man speaks to his friend. How do we know this? As has often been the case since the third chapter of the book of Exodus, the *parsha ha-shavua*⁵ begins with these words: ***Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l’emor*** - and the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying **Numbers 4:21**.

Seek such a Divine encounter as well, Dear Reader. Every such encounter brings new levels of inspiration, revelation, empowerment, and direction.

Discovering the Part We Are Called to Play At Such A Time as This: Matters of Task, Mission, Purpose, and Embracing Destiny

In the course of the particular God-encounter that kicks off parsha *Naso* the Holy One downloads instructions concerning a number of things we will need to know on the next phase of our journey. First of all the Holy One describes to Moshe the specific tasks and assignments to which He the various groups of people in the tribe of Levi to perform during the upcoming march.

Have you ever wondered what YOUR specific tasks and assignments on earth are

⁵ I.e. the section of Torah assigned for study throughout this particular week.

at such a time as this? Have you ever wondered FOR WHAT TASKS, WHAT MISSIONS, WHAT PURPOSES AND WHAT DESTINY YOU HAVE BEEN PLACED ON EARTH? If so do not be surprised if the Holy One has something stunning and wonderful to say to you as you read and meditate upon the beautiful description the Divine Bridegroom gave Moshe regarding the calling, purpose and destiny of the various clans of his brethren of the tribe of Levi.

Secondly the Holy One will give Moshe directions concerning the separating out from the camp of those who manifest what English translations of the Bible like to call 'leprosy'. Then the Creator of the Universe will detail to Moshe the essential prerequisites and evidences of true *t'shuvah* [repentance].

The Holy One will then instruct Moshe concerning the protocols of holiness that pertain to the *Nazarites*. He will then specify the exact words with which He desires Aharon and his sons to 'bless' the people He is calling forth to be His Kingdom's Royal Ambassadors to the nations and peoples of the earth. He wants our focus to be constantly refocused upon six primary things/tasks: [1] walking in His Empowerment; [2] enjoying and trusting in His protection; [3] accurately reflecting the expressions and emotions of His Face, [4] dispensing His Grace/graciousness, [5] spreading His Radiant Beauty throughout the world; and [6] and modeling to the world the wholeness and serenity in which man was designed - and is through Covenant called and empowered - to walk.

It is going to be a *very full week* of revelation through Divine Encounter. Let's get started, shall we?

Parsha Naso and Its Correlation With the Divine Calendar the Holy One Has Ordained For Us

This *parsha* is always studied in at or about the time of *Chag Shavuot* – the *Festival of Weeks*⁶. *Shavuot* is the *moed* that occurs each year on the 50th day after the Sabbath that follows *Pesach*. Between that Sabbath and *Shavuot* the Holy One has instructed us to be about the business of *counting*. Specifically, we are to be doing something called *counting the omer*. I will leave a thorough discussion of that subject to another day, but suffice it to say that it involves a building sense of anticipation, expectation, and excitement. On the fiftieth day after that Sabbath we are instructed in Torah to appear before the Holy One and wave before Him two loaves of leavened bread made from the first fruits of the year's wheat crop.

⁶ *Chag Shavuot* is the Biblical festival known to most of the world as 'Pentecost', which coincides with the wheat harvest in Eretz Yisrael, and by tradition, is the date on which we commemorate and relive the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

In c. 29 C.E., on the 40th day of the period assigned for *counting the omer*, the resurrected Yeshua of Natzret ascended to the Right Hand of the Holy One in Heaven. Thereafter, in accordance with His instructions His talmidim gathered together in Jerusalem to complete the counting of the Omer. On the much-anticipated 50th day – the 11th day after the dramatic ascension of Yeshua - the apostolic writings tell us:

*when the day of **Shavu`ot** came they were all with one accord in one place.
Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind,
and it **filled all the house** where they were sitting.
Tongues like fire appeared, and were **distributed to them**, and **one sat on each of them.**
They were all **filled with the Ruach HaKodesh**,
and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.*

Wow! Talk about a mo'ed to remember! The apostolic writings tell us that when this amazing sign and wonder occurred all those who were in Jerusalem for the commemoration of *Shavuot* were amazed and perplexed. They said one to another, "What does this mean?" Some of the people even mocked, saying: "They are filled with new wine." But Kefa proclaimed that what had happened was both a partial fulfillment of and a down payment on ultimate fulfillment of a prophetic promise of the Holy One to Yisrael through the prophet Yoel:

*'It will be in the end of days, says the Holy One, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.
Your sons and your daughters will prophesy.
Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams.*

Kefa then spoke to all those gathered of Yeshua's Ascension into Heaven one day to return and rule upon the earth, and declared:

***Make T'shuvah!**
And undergo mikveh, every one of you, in the name of Yeshua the Messiah
for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the **Ruach HaKodesh**.
For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all who are far off,
even as many as the Holy One our God will call to himself."
With many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying,
"Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"*

The key concepts to look for this week – the week of parsha *Naso* - are thus going to be:

1. gazing longingly and expectantly toward Heaven;
2. raising the level of expectation that the Holy One is about to do something miraculous in our world;
3. making "t'shuvah" [repentance];
4. undergoing 'mikveh' and
5. saving ourselves from the crooked generation in which we live.

The Context and Name of this Week's Parsha

The week of *Naso* begins with the Holy One speaking the following words:

Naso et-rosh b'nei Gershon gam-hem

Lift up the head of Gershon's descendants, also them ...

I'veyt avotam I'mishpechotam

according to their father's houses/lineages, family by family

[Numbers 4:21-22]

As you see from the above transliteration of the Hebrew text the first word the Holy One spoke in the message above is “*Naso*”. It is for that reason that *Naso* has been designated by the sages of Israel as the Hebraic ‘name’ for the parsha. Let’s look at this fascinating Hebrew word a little more closely, shall we? The word *Naso* is formed by combining the Hebrew consonants *nun*, *shin*, and *alef*⁷. This is a derivative form of the Hebrew verb *nasa*, meaning “*elevate; fetch; cause to arise; cause to advance; bring forward; cause to step up; give attention to, give regard to, give respect to.*”

The first Biblical usage of this Hebrew verb is in Genesis 4:13, in the context of the discourse between *Kayin* [Cain] and the Holy One after *Kayin* kills his brother *Hevel* [Abel]. The Holy One tells *Kayin* that the ground on which he spilled *Hevel*’s blood will no longer yield its produce for him and that he will be a wanderer all his life. *Kayin* replies ***Gadol avoni m'naso*** [“*My guilt [is] great; Will I carry/bear it perpetually?*” English translators have tried to assist the Western reader and have recast these words into a Western and decidedly ‘Christian’ mentality. Thus your English Bible probably interprets the last phrase something like “*my punishment is greater than I can bear.*”

The next usage of the verb *nasa* is found in Genesis 7:17. There it describes the effect the waters of the flood had upon the *teivah* [ark] *Noach* built. The Torah there tells us: ... *the waters increased, and nasa* [lifted up] *the ark* ...

Discovering the Essence of Naso Through the Hebraic Word Picture

As we have discussed in detail in previous lessons, every Hebrew letter is at its essence a hieroglyphic-like picture and every Hebrew word is at its essence a hieroglyphic-like mural. The words *nasa* and *naso* are both made up of the letters *nun* (which makes the “n” sound), *shin* (which, in this case, makes the “s” sound), and *alef* (which makes the “o” sound in *naso* and the ah sound in *nasa*). When we look at these letters one by one we find that the letter *nun* is a hieroglyphic-like picture representing a son or heir. The *shin* represents a picture of ascending tongues of fire (flames), such as *Moshe* saw coming from the bush on *Sinai* in *Exodus* 3. The

⁷ The combination creates Strong’s Hebrew word #5375, pronounced *naw - so*’

alef represents the Holy One, from whom all things emanate.

Putting this all together we see that the word *naso* presents a Hieroglyphic-like mural of a *son or heir* entering *ascending flames* and appearing before the **Holy One**. Consider this in light of the story of Kayin and Hevel, where the verb root is first used. What Kayin was really expressing in Genesis 4:13 was a fear that because his sin/guilt is so great he would not be able to ascend through the flames to the Holy One, but would be consumed by the fire. *He was thus expressing his fear that he would be banished from communion with the Holy One because of his sin.* Do you now see the connection between *Naso* and *t'shuvah*?

Take a Census?

In the English translations of our parsha the Hebrew word *naso* as found in the opening verse is usually translated “*take a census*”, or “*count*”. The concept of ‘counting heads’ is certainly a part of what the Holy One is saying. It is however only a very *small* part of the directive. Indeed, to focus on only the physical counting part of what the Holy One is saying is to rob the passage of its Hebraic essence, and to thereby reduce the opening phrase of our parsha to a mere historical narrative.

The opening phrase “*Naso et-rosh*” literally does not mean “*take a census*”. Literally, the phrase *naso et-rosh* means instead “*lift up the head!* From a Hebraic perspective to *lift up the head* means “*appear before the Holy One, to look through the ascending flames of fire, to focus all one’s attention upon the Holy One, and to have confidence!* This Hebraic perspective of the verb *nasa* is the essence of the phrase Yeshua used in Luke 21:28 when describing to His *talmidim* the secret to knowing when the end-times are upon us:

*... when these things⁸ begin to happen, look up,
and lift up the head, because your redemption is near.*

Naso et-rosh means to *lift up the head* and to *look through the ascending flames of fire, and focus upon and trust in the Holy One*. That is, of course, exactly what the Holy One tells Moshe to cause two more groups of people to do in the parsha’s opening aliyah. The Holy One tells Moshe to cause two of the three clans descended from Ya’akov and Leah’s third son, Levi – i.e. the *Gershonim* [Gershonites] and the *Merarim* [Merarites], to *naso et-rosh* - lift up their heads – and

⁸ “*These things*”, according to Yeshua, are: [1] great distress in the land of Israel, [2] great wrath being expressed toward the Jewish people; [3] many Jewish people falling ‘by the edge of the sword’, [4] many Jewish people being led captive into all the nations, [5] Jerusalem being taken over and desecrated by the nations, until the Holy One’s compassions are aroused for Israel, and against the nations; [6] signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and [7] great anxiety in the nations, who are perplexed by ‘the roaring of the sea and the waves’; [8] men fainting for fear of what is going on in the world: as the ‘powers of the heavens’ begin to shake. **Luke 21:23-26.**

see Him through the fire.

Moshe's first task when this particular God-encounter concludes will be to call the Gershonim and Merarim "front and center" - to receive a prophetic announcement and empowering from the Holy One.

Appearing One-by-One Before the Manifest Presence

Just as the Holy One did with every other tribe and with the *K'hatim* clan from the tribe of Levi last week in parsha B'midbar, so now, in *Naso*, the Holy One calls each *Gershoni* and *Merari*, to come forward before Moshe, to gaze into the Cloud of His Manifest Presence, and through the revelation received there, to declare his true identity. One by one those called forth are to declare before the Holy One their *Hebrew names* and the *lineages* under which they claim a right of inheritance under the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham and renewed with Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. Ostensibly, this was done so that each individual could be registered by name and lineage as heirs of the Promised Land⁹. The effect of the call was however much more profound. Appearing before and gazing into the *Manifest Presence* one-by-one, each man was called upon to abandon the ways he had practiced and the self-image he acquired in Egypt.

What happened as a consequence was a supernatural restoration of each man to his family, his clan, his tribe, and his birthright. We learned last week that this would be followed by a *physical change of address*, as each man journeyed, with his wife, children, animals and belongings, to a new place in the camp next to his long-lost blood kinsmen, placing his family ensign in the vicinity of the standard of his clan and the banner of his tribe.

This required a *total paradigm shift*. The focus changed from what we who followed the pillar of fire and cloud out of Egypt had been and what had defined our priorities and purpose in life while in Pharaoh's kingdom to *who the Holy One had called us to be*, and what was, therefore, to define our *priorities* and our *purpose in life* henceforth. Our Divine Bridegroom called us to *nasa* - to *lift up our heads*. It was not just to *be counted* that we were being called forward. Oh no - it was much, much more than that. We were being called forward *to make our lives truly count*. And for a sneak preview of what that might look like, let's take a quick tour of parsha *Naso*.

⁹ The tribe of Levi, of course, had no specific territory in Eretz Yisrael allocated to it as a tribe. However, spread throughout the land were to be 48 'Levitical Cities', in which the Levi'im were to live. And in and around those cities, they were to possess parcels of land. So, even the Levi'im had a physical inheritance - though markedly different from the other tribes - in the Promised Land.

A Parsha Naso Travelogue

Parsha *Naso* opens with the now familiar formula ‘*vayedaber Adonai*’ – i.e. *and the Holy One spoke* Our Bridegroom-King is *speaking again!* This particular section of the Great Sinaitic Discourse will continue with only one short interruption all the way from Chapter 4, verse 21 through chapter 6, verse 27, and will cover many subjects.

1. The Assignments of The Families of Gershon and Merari

[Numbers 4:21-33]

The Holy One begins this particular Discourse by describing for Moshe the tasks for which He has appointed the members of the Levitical clans descended from *Gershon* and *Merari*. The families of Gershon were to pack up and transport the *Mish'kan*'s tapestries, veils and coverings. The families of Merari were to break down, carry and reassemble the structural components of the *Mish'kan* – all its beams, boards, sockets, and pillars.

2. The Numbering of the Levitical Clans

[Numbers 4:34-49]

The only interruption of the Divine Discourse that dominates the early part of Parsha *Naso* is a very brief narrative describing the results of the counting of the various Levitical clans. We will be told that the family of *K'hat* contained 2,750 men between the ages of 30 and 50 that the male population of Gershon for the same ages was 2,630, and that the male population of Merari in that age group was 3,200. That meant that a total of 8,580 men of the appropriate age were available for the work of setting up, transporting, and breaking down the *Mish'kan*.

3. The Separation of Specific Individuals in Super-Tamei Status

[Numbers 5:1-4]

The Divine Discourse then continues with the Holy One giving instructions that persons with particular states of *tamei* status be set up with residences outside the camp during the pendency of their uncleanness. The three groups who were to be specially accommodated outside the camp included: 1. *metzorum* [i.e. those with *tzara'at*]; 2. *zubim* [i.e. those with unnatural discharges], and all who are *tamei l'nefesh* [i.e. contaminated by a soul].

4. The Protocol for Restoration of a Covenant-Breaker

[Numbers 5:5-10]

The next subject the Holy One covers with us involves what we are called to do when we commit a breach of the Covenant. The section starts with the Holy One saying: ***When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the Holy One*** This is truly an amazing Covenant – it even has protocols built into it to take care of its most egregious breaches!

The first thing the Holy One says is supposed to happen when some man breaches the Covenant is translated into English as CONFESSION. Is that an accurate translation of the Hebrew verb *yada*? We will see!

Step two of the protocol for restoration is translated into English as making RESTITUTION. Is that an accurate translation of Hebrew verb *shuv*? We will find out!

And the third step in the process is translated by our English Bibles into the word ATONEMENT. Is that an accurate translation of the Hebrew verb *kafar*? Time – and a little study – will tell!

5. The Protocol for Clearing the Suspected Adulterous

[Numbers 5:11-31]

What if – Heaven forbid – a man in Covenant with the Holy One suspect that his wife has been unfaithful to him? The Holy One sort of knows what that might feel like. He also knows the potentially disastrous impact inter-spousal jealousy and offense has on the advancement of His ‘Kingdom counter-culture’ – the *sine qua non* of which is supposed to be *bayit shalom* [peace, safety, wellness, wholeness, and kindness/gentleness/hospitality in the home]. The Holy One knows that women – even in the Covenant community – are subject to *fleshly emotions, physical attractions, self-absorption, and romantic voyeurism – not to mention attitudes of entitlement and/or victimization; disrespect and rebellion, boredom, and the temptation to lightly consider even the most sacred of vows*. He knows that men – even redeemed men – can be wounded, weak, and broken. He knows that when they feel rejected, unloved, or betrayed, they can go out of their minds with negative emotions raging from offense to anxiety to jealousy to rage. He knows they can lose their shalom and simchah – *i.e.* peace and joy - lose their focus, and abandon their post and assignment in the Kingdom. He knows that sometimes men are insecure in their relationships; and that at other times they project their own *fleshly emotions, physical attractions, self-absorption, romantic voyeurism, attitudes of entitlement and/or victimization; disrespect and rebellion, boredom, and the temptation to lightly consider even the most sacred of vows* to their wives.

So the Holy One provides a protocol to handle the situation – and help the people involved, and the community, move on. The protocol is radical – and not intended to be regarded by any human being as ‘fair’. Trauma has already happened – it has to be addressed, not molly-coddled. So, He directs that if a husband in the Covenant Community seriously suspects his Covenant Community of adultery, he is to bring her to the *Mish’kan* – along with a special offering of barley meal. He is to tell the *kohen* on duty exactly what he suspects and why he suspects it. Then the *kohen* is to “*bring [the woman] near and set her before the Holy One*”. The consequences of this could be serious. So, of course, the husband can back out

at any time – and just say ‘wait – let’s go home and talk about it!’ But if he does not back out and abort the process, he has to take – and the wife has to endure – whatever the Divinely-scripted consequences turn out to be. If the woman is guilty of adultery as charged, I would presume that she would start getting very nervous when she hears the accusations being made to the priest, and hopefully come clean. If the husband has doubts about what really happened, I suspect the prospect of direct intervention of the Holy One that comes with his laying out the charges to the *kohen* could potentially be pretty unnerving for him as well. But if the process continues, the accused woman is to be given a special container of water to which has been added some of the sanctified dust from the floor of the *Mish’kan*. Where have we heard this before? It sounds like the aftermath of the golden calf episode, right? Moshe had the golden calf ground up and mixed with water, and he made the people drink of the concoction! **Exodus 32:20**. The accused wife will then be required to state on oath whether she did or did not commit adultery as accused. The priest was then to write a set of blessings and curses on parchment, scrape the dried ink off the parchment into the water mixture, and give it to the woman to drink. What happens next – if the husband lets it go that far, of course – will determine the woman’s future and to some extent that of the man – and their bloodlines forever. This is not a game. It is, instead, very, very holy!

6. The Protocols of the Nazirite

[Numbers 6:1-21]

The next subject addressed by the Holy One is the amazing situation where a person passionately desires to dedicate his life – or a certain period of time – exclusively to the *avodah* of the Holy One. The protocol the Holy One lays out for such a person involves a vow, three special abstentions, and a special series of confirming offerings.

7. The Aharonic Blessing

[Numbers 6:22-27]

The Holy One will then dictate word-for-word to Moshe a blessing which Aharon and his sons are to pronounce over the Covenant people in order that the Holy One might ‘place His Name’ on them.

8. The Inauguration-Day Gifts of Each Tribe

[Numbers 7:1-88]

The Voice of the Holy One will then fall silent, and Moshe will revert to a narrative mode. He will describe in detail the inauguration gifts supplied by the various tribes of Israel on the day the *Mish’kan* was dedicated. These gifts came in two forms: collective [the result of collaboration between two tribes] and individual [gifts unique to each tribe].

9. The Means of Divine Communication in the New Season

[Numbers 7:89]

The final verse of our *parsha ha-shavua* describes the protocols as to how, after the *Mish'kan* was dedicated and its service inaugurated, the Holy One would talk to Moshe. He would actually cause His voice to radiate outward from between the wings of the two cherubim that sat atop the Ark of Testimony, in the *Mish'kan's* Most Holy Chamber.

Introductory Notes on Haftarah Naso

Judges 13:2-25

To complement the Torah readings from *Naso* we will read a fascinating excerpt from the Book of Judges. The particular passage we will study will describe the miraculous events leading to the conception and birth of *Shimshon* – familiar to most English speakers as *Sampson*. *Shimshon* was a descendant of the tribe of Dan. The story begins in the village of Tzorah, where a man named Manoach lived with his wife. After years of barrenness an angel appeared to the wife with the following stunning message:

hineh-na at-akarah v'lo yaladet

Behold, you are barren, and have no children

V'harit v'yaladet ben

but you will conceive, and bear a son.

[Judges 13:3]

On behalf of the Holy One the angelic messenger proclaims a *sign and wonder* - a barren woman will miraculously conceive! A lifeless womb will be Divinely empowered to receive, nurture and bring forth a child – indeed, a son to carry on the name and lineage of Manoach. What a *tremendous gift of grace* the Holy One promises to this couple! Imagine *the woman's joy!*

We will eventually learn that the son the Holy One is going to give to Manoach is to be *a very special child with a very special mission*. Long before he is ever born the angel of the Holy One will declare to Manoach that the child's purpose in life is to *begin to deliver Yisrael from the hand of the Ph'lishtim*. Manoach and his wife will then experience a 'minor' sign and a wonder as a down-payment on the promise of a son, as the angel of the Holy One will enter the flames on the altar of *korban olah* Manoach builds and ascends into Heaven right before their eyes. Get that picture – the image of Manoach and his wife staring into the flames of the altar and watching in awe as the angel of the Holy One ascends into Heaven – into your spirits, Dear Reader. If you do, you will begin to understand what it means for the Holy One to say '*naso et-rosh*' – *lift up the head!*

***A Brief Note About the Corresponding Readings From
the Apostolic Scriptures***

Acts 21:17-26

We will also this week be reading a passage from chapter 21 of the Book of Acts. In that passage we will see Here is how Lukas' account of the encounter begins:

*When we had come to Y'rushalayim, the brothers received us gladly.
The day following, Sha'ul went in with us to Ya`akov; and all the Zakenim were present.
When he had greeted them he reported one by one
the things that the Holy One had worked among the Goyim through his ministry.*

These events occurred, of course, during the Feast of *Shavuot* [Pentecost]. Try to grasp the tremendous sense of destiny that gripped Shaul as the events about which we will read unfolded. Try to enter into the thought processes and emotions of Shaul.

May you feel a great sense of expectation – and may you prepared for a *life-changing encounter*.

*May we, and all the Holy One's People, love His Torah,
and trust in His Deliverer and the deliverance He brings.*

The Rabbi's Son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

Petition #6: ***B'racha*** – Blessing

B'rech oleinu Adonai Eloheinu et-ha-shanah hazot

Bless this year for our us, O Holy One our God

V'et kol mineh t'vuatah l'tovah

that all our plantings may yield a good, fruitful harvest

v'ten b'racha al p'nei ha-adamah

and give a blessing on the face of the earth

v'sabeinu mituveicha

satisfy us with Your bounty

u'varech shanahteinu ka-shonim ha-tovot

and bless our year, so as to make it a banner year

Baruch Atah Adonai M'vorech ha-shonim

Blessed are You, O Holy One, Who Blesses the Years