



Jewish Community Center of Paramus

A Home, A Family, A Spiritual Community



Naso

Bamidbar (Numbers) 4:21-7:89

This week's Torah reading, *Parshat Naso*, the second of the *Parshiyot* in the Book of *Bamidbar* (Numbers), continues the counting of the Levites, and explains their specific responsibilities with respect to the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The census showed that there were 8,580 males between the ages of 30 and 50 who were fit to serve in the *Mishkan*.

Parshat Naso also deals with the *sotah*, a woman suspected of adultery. This most misunderstood section of the *Torah* deals specifically with the situation of a husband who suspects his wife of infidelity yet lacks any proof, evidence, or witnesses. To remedy the situation, and to restore harmony between husband and wife, the *Parshah* prescribes an elaborate ritual which allows the couple to reestablish their lives together.

Perhaps one of the most famous sections in the entire Torah is found in the sixth chapter of *Parshat Naso*. G-d commands Moses to teach Aaron a special blessing which we know as the Priestly blessing. It is one of the few prayers found in the *Torah* which remain an important part of our liturgy today. The *Mishnah* describes the blessing as given by the *Kohanim* from an elevated platform called a "duchan". Today "duchanan" means to deliver the priestly blessing. Though not a regular feature of our synagogue's Shabbat and holiday observance, the priestly blessing was observed at our three Persian Shabbats. Perhaps you remember how in preparation for this blessing the *Kohanim* washed their hands, removed their shoes, pulled their tallit over their heads, and raised their arms and arranged their hands in the shape of the letter Shin. It is also the custom for the *Kohanim* and the congregation to avoid looking at each other during this ritual in order to help them maintain an intense level of concentration.

The *Parshah* concludes with the description of the gifts given by each tribe on the day the *Mishkan* was consecrated.



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