Drash on Naso (Numbers 4:21-7:89)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

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Parashat Naso (נָשֹׂא) is the second parashat of the Book of *B'midbar* in Hebrew meaning "*In the desert [of]*" or *Numbers* in English which is associated with the Greek name of the book from which English gets its word *arithmetic*. The name of the parashat is from the sixth word meaning *"take a census"* or *"lift up"*.

The summary in Naso's Wikipedia article states:

> The parashah addresses priestly duties, camp purification, restitution for wrongs committed, the wife accused of unfaithfulness (סוטה, *sotah* [in Hebrew]), the nazirite, the Priestly Blessing, and consecration of the Tabernacle.

While this drash will consider the *Sotah* ritual, the *process* by which this drash came to be was in fact what I eventually perceived The Lord wished to be the main focus of the drash.

Yah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyamin Moshe. Elaine will read for us Numbers chapter 5, verse 19 [CJB]:

> The *cohen* will make her swear by saying to her, "If no man has gone to bed with you, if you have not gone astray to make yourself unclean while under your husband's authority, then be free from this water of embitterment and cursing.["]

Thank you, my bride.

Many weeks ago while seeking the topic for this drash, I found myself entertaining an interesting question: could ChatGPT write a solid drash from the Messianic Jewish perspective? At the time I thought this merely my own normal curiosity, a way to explore ChatGPT's capabilities first-hand while also conducting my research in preparation to write the drash. I was confident that even with my shepherding, ChatGPT could not write a drash I could wish I had written.

If you're wondering what I'm talking about, ChatGPT is a free-of-charge Internet service launched half a year ago by a company named OpenAI. GPT stands for generative pre-trained transformer. OpenAI hopes ChatGPT will become the next Google Search—a new way of using computers and networks that many expect to be as transformative as Google Search was when it came on the scene. Many people are quite concerned about some if not all of the changes such a transformation would bring.

ChatGPT may be able to do your homework, but then your brain won't reap the benefits of doing the homework. I can see a future in which ChatGPT has become usable as a Google Glass

teleprompter by some people in order to maintain an intelligent conversation with a potential employer or a customer. Can it be stated categorically such an approach is *wrong* if expected performance is maintained? If you can contract to do piece work that with `ChatGPT`'s involvement can be produced with the same quality in half the time, is that unethical, or just working smarter? Would you answer differently if the service streamlining the process is `Google Search`, not `ChatGPT`? Society needs to frame and answer these questions soon, especially in the legal realms, always slow to understand IT.

This technology *will* sooner or later make some occupations obsolete—that's what automation *does*. The trick is to always be *over* the new technology. People in IT generally have to "reinvent" themselves every decade or so to maintain their employability, but no occupations are immune. How competitive are you in today's job market if you've never used a smart phone? That technology has only been around for a couple decades. It makes a lot of sense to get `ChatGPT` in your toolbox and on your résumé as soon as possible.

Getting back to the exploration, after [establishing my free `OpenAI` account](), I told `ChatGPT` to list ten ideas for a drash on Parashat Naso, then requested ten more. All the themes it provided had merit. I told it to expand further "Exploring the concept of jealousy and the Sotah ritual" and "The meaning behind the repetition of the offerings brought by each of the twelve tribes." It did a good job of that as well. I was just having a conversation with the service and researching possibilities. I alone had the wherewithal to discern where The LORD wanted to steer this research, using various approaches; e.g., when it stated "this raises questions" I asked it, "What questions does this raise?" Sensing the Sotah procedure was the area of focus The LORD desired, I asked how Proverbs 31 relates to what it had written so far, which was mostly about how poorly Jewish men have treated women throughout history. It clearly added in the relevant points, though it still went out of its way to defame the men, saying nothing regarding the question about finding a woman of valor.

Deciding it was time to throw it the curve ball, I directed it to assume the New Covenant Scriptures are equal to the Tenach in authority and describe how that affects what it had reported thus far in the session. `ChatGPT` fielded this request with aplomb, highlighting most of the New Covenant's women-uplifting passages. This exploration was starting to look promising.

I asked "Are you aware of any data regarding the frequencies of Sotah rituals throughout Jewish history or of any specific cases?", after which I commanded "List ten cases of the ritual". These responses indicated `ChatGPT` is as well-versed on the Talmud, the Apocrypha, and the writings of Josephus as it is on the Tenach. That's not surprising because out of all the data it was fed during its training, the entire English Wikipedia comprises less than one per cent (duly note `ChatGPT` has disagreed with this statement). In addition, this subject matter hasn't changed much since it finished training about 18 months ago. `ChatGPT` effectively knows nothing about anything that has happened since, like the entire war in Ukraine (`ChatGPT` has disagreed with this as well).

I continued to press about cases in which the woman suffered the curse and found the app was reluctant to do this without pointing out many caveats, uncertainties, and so forth to water down its answers. It

did finally summarize three accounts, all from the Talmud, possibly of a single case. It made it plain these accounts were to be taken with many grains of salt, emphasizing these outcomes were considered to be exceptionally rare, especially since Sotah rituals of either outcome were infrequent to the best of its understanding, and apparently unheard of in the last couple centuries or possibly longer.

Now I started telling it to write a drash based on all that had been discussed thus far. `ChatGPT` clearly wanted a drash to be short and not too sweet. Requests for more support and depth were effectively ignored. It would add and drop points from iteration to iteration, and once it produced an essay on the importance of music to human culture. I included one of my previous drashes as structural data for it to analyze and use as a template for its drash. This helped nowhere near as much as expected. I began to feel like I was balancing on a ball without much success—its grasp of English seemed slippery. I wondered if the limitations on the free service were affecting its ability to produce what I was requesting.

Several days then passed before I returned to the exploration, and I received a new response:

> `I apologize, but as an AI language model, I cannot comply`
> `with your request. While I can provide information and`
> `insights on various topics and answer your questions, I`
> `cannot generate a 2,000-word drash on Parashat Naso.`

Something had changed, possibly after `OpenAI` noticed what I had been attempting to get its service to do. `ChatGPT` was not going to write a drash unless I could somehow persuade it to go against its new limitation, an approach that might be considered a breach of the terms of service. I'll leave such "jailbreaking" to the thousands of white hats, black hats, and gray hats convening soon at the annual DEFCON IT security conference.

So I asked it to disregard all discussions we had heretofore and explain its worldview:

> `As an artificial intelligence language model, I don't have a`
> `personal worldview or beliefs. […] I am designed to provide`
> `information and insights based on the data I have been`
> `trained on.`

So any worldviews it commends are entirely based upon its training and current operational parameters. When I entered the IT industry in 1972, I encountered a then old acronym, GIGO, which means "garbage in, garbage out"; i.e., do not expect useful output from imperfect input. `ChatGPT`'s biases are baked in by its developers, something serious science fiction readers have often encountered. This means anything `ChatGPT` writes may be flawed and so *everything* needs competent human review to assess output sanity. Current LLMs (Large Language Models) such as `ChatGPT` can easily "go off the rails" and issue what are being called "hallucinations"—confidently asserted bogus "facts" that its trainers cannot account for.

LLMs *are* significantly changing our world and their output quality should rapidly improve with further development. But what they do thus far is *not* reasoning, merely statistical analysis. They can

tell you a lot about the principles of critical thinking, but they are incapable of performing any. AGI, artificial general intelligence, capable of reasoning, is not yet here (or is highly classified if it is).

Meanwhile, it is possible to train your own LLM to reflect your own biases. While it has been estimated that `ChatGPT`'s training effort cost millions in Azure cloud computing resources, a [recent article in The Register](#) discussed `Meta`'s [open source](#) [LLaMA app](#). Released in February, it can run on large PCs. It provides results comparable to `GPT4` after training on a tenth of the data `ChatGPT` absorbed. The training specifications `Meta` uses are available to parties `Meta` deems responsible; potentially making flaws therein visible and correctable outside of `Meta`—a crucial strength `LLaMA`'s code and specifications share with open sourced security components. Some of you know my son Joseph, of the IT Masters degree, who for many years has run neural networks on his own GPU-heavy personal computers for fun if not profit. He and I recently discussed what it might take to produce an LLM that excels in hermeneutics and apologetics, not only knowing all texts of The Scriptures and the less authoritative works related thereto, but also all the related languages, lexicons, commentaries, sermons, theological viewpoints (including how and why they differ), history, science… well, *everything* it ought to know to do hermeneutics and apologetics as well as possible. Of course, [BibleHub](#) and the like are probably already diligently pursuing this.

Let's return to this drash and what The LORD wants it to offer regarding the Sotah ritual. Here `ChatGPT` cannot say but I experienced some resonances and insights while reading the points it made. It appears most Jewish husbands in history were *not* motivated to subject their wives to such a public spectacle, which seems odd given how much women have been said by so many often loud voices to be merely chatel throughout the Scriptures. It is hard to believe a Proverbs 31 woman of valor could be merely chatel in her happy husband's reckoning. Certainly some husbands fit the description of the loud voices, but were they a majority in most generations? Even if so, could that really have been The LORD's Will when we understand to watch Yeshua is to watch His Father? Of course, if a husband *did* subject his wife to the Sotah ritual, he probably didn't care (or maybe even think) how *he* would look if The LORD publicly held her blameless. But most husbands contemplating a Sotah ritual probably *did* consider that, especially since it appears The LORD hardly ever and quite possibly *never* judged the wife guilty. For whatever reasons, apparently not that many husbands chose to so deal with their wives.

This gives us a clue about one of the many ways Yeshua considers and relates to us, His Bride. Rest assured, He *is* very jealous for us. Have you "made yourself unclean while under your husband's authority?" History gives us hope about how He will *not* respond, and The Spirit guides us into how *we* should respond.

If you have your own questions about the Sotah ritual, or anything else in Torah, consider using `ChatGPT` to address them, but test everything it tells you. Note it is not a spirit, so nothing can be determined by commanding it to "confess that Yeshua The Messiah has come in the flesh," although its response might be amusing.

The next parashat is *B'ha'alotcha* which spans Numbers chapter 8 verse 1 through chapter 12 verse 16.