

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Parshas Naso 5770



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Modern Day Centrism (The TorahWeb Foundation)

In the order of the mishnayos, Maseches Sotah follows Masaeches Nazir. The Talmud explains that this is based on the pesukim in parshas Naso, where the parshiyos of nazir and sotah are next to each other. The reason for the juxtaposition is explained by the Talmud as follows: normally the Torah does not want us to be extreme. The middos are referred to as such because each must be implemented with the proper measure (the Hebrew word "middah" means a measure). One who accepts upon himself to become a nazir, i.e. to become, in a certain sense, an ascetic, and to totally abstain from wine, is considered a sinner. However, once in while we consider a nazir to be a kadosh - a holy person. One who lives in a generation (like ours) where there is much corruption and pritzus, and one who witnesses a sotah, must be concerned that he too may follow the path of the corrupt society. Under such circumstances the Torah recommends that we take extreme measures to offset the improper influence of society.

The Rambam is famous for his presentation of this idea in Hilchos De'os. One of the modern Jewish thinkers has attacked the Rambam for having picked up this concept from the Greek philosophers and presenting it in Mishna Torah, as if it had a source in Talmudic literature. But the truth is that it is rooted in the rabbinic comment regarding the juxtaposition of the two parshiyos of nazir and sotah.

We live in a generation of instant communication. Everyone around the world is notified immediately about all the ganovim and all the sotos anywhere in the world. We do not just see one sotah, rather we are made aware of many sotos. Although under normal conditions it would not be healthy to follow an extreme path in life, in our circumstances extreme measures are recommended.

This recommendation is true not only in the area of bein adam laMakom, but also in the area of bein adam lachaveiro. We are surrounded with many who cheat in business, cheat on income tax, sales tax, etc. We should be careful not only to be honest and follow the law, but even bend over backwards to make sure that we don't follow these extremely improper practices of our society. The Talmud describes kosher fish as having a backbone, and having the ability to swim upstream, i.e. against the current. Jews must always develop such a backbone and see to it that they swim against the current.

The Rambam interprets the mishna in Pirkei Avos as recommending yet another exception to "the golden rule." The Tanna Rabbi Levitas of Yavne used to say, that one should always be "very very" humble. The Rambam interprets the repetition of the term "very" to imply that one ought not to follow the golden mean with respect to arrogance and humility, but should rather go to an extreme in adopting the quality of humility.

The Rambam explains that biblically humility and arrogance should be the same as any other middos and one should attempt to follow the middle path, but just as the rabbis introduced so many gezeiros and harchokos in the area of bein adam laMakom and bein adam lachaveiro, so too here did they introduce a gezeira in this area of bein adam le'atzmo. The rabbis were concerned that many people, or perhaps most people, would not be able to determine where the midpoint is between arrogance and humility, and would most probably err on the side of arrogance. Therefore the rabbis made a gezeira derabanan that we must all go to the extreme regarding humility.

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Nasso
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Overview

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbors property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a kohen. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A kohen prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing G-d's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A nazir is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The kohanim are commanded to bless the people. The Mishkan is completed and dedicated on the first day of Nisan in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the Mishkan, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

Insights

The Hidden Face

"May G-d illuminate His countenance..."(6:26)

Newspapers are depressing things.

We read of tragedies and war and natural disaster. It's easy to think, "Where's G-d in all this?"

The answer is in this verse, "I will surely have hidden My face." (Devarim 2:18)

G-d will never abandon us. Rather, we feel that He has forsaken us, because He has hidden His face. When G-d hides 'His face' it means that we cannot see Him controlling events. It seems to us that chaos rules.

Nothing happens that He does not decree. The decree for every event that has happened this year was sealed last Yom Kippur: "...who will live and who will die."

He is always with us. And if we look carefully at events, even though we cannot see G-d's 'face', we can at least discern His 'back', we can see the telltale footprints in the snow of history.

When we fail G-d so totally and we feel there is no way back to Him, we must remember that He is always there behind the mask of the world, waiting for us to return through prayer and teshuva (repentance).

"I will surely have hidden My face."

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic "to surely do" something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase "I will surely have hidden My face" is "Hide - I will have hidden My face." The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this 'hiding'. There are two kinds of concealment: a concealment where you know that someone is there but you just can't see them, and a concealment where you don't even know if they are there at all. In other words the very fact of their hiddenness is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding — where the very hiding is hidden.

When we are aware that G-d has hidden from us, He is not really concealed, because we realize that our hiding from Him has been reciprocated by His hiding from us. It's like any relationship: when you act coldly towards your beloved, she doesn't feel the confidence to be close to you anymore so she retreats from you. But if you honestly ask for forgiveness and promise her that you really want to be close, then she will take you back.

However, there's a deeper hiding of the "face." In this hiding, the hiding is itself hidden. Then we don't see that we have a relationship with G-d at all.

We think that this is the way the world is supposed to be. Then we are in big trouble because nothing awakens us to return to Him. We think to ourselves: "This is the way things are supposed to be? Isn't it? I'm supposed to be single."

One of the blessings that a kohen bestows on the Jewish People is that G-d should "illuminate His countenance for you." Obviously, G-d does not have a countenance, a face, in the literal physical sense of its meaning. The meaning of this blessing is that we should see everything that happens in the world as directly coming from G-d; that there is no such thing as 'natural causes;' that everything in our lives is directly sent to us from Him. The blessing of the kohen is that we see "His face" in the world — that His presence is clear to all who choose to see it. Then we can shake ourselves from the bonds of our illusions, re-establish our relationship with Him, return to His Torah, and realize that nothing is real except Him.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Shema Yisrael Torah Network Parshas Nasso

A man or woman who commits any of man's sins... they shall confess the sin that they committed. (5:6,7)

Sometimes the motivation to aspire to greater heights, to plumb the Torah to greater depths, is not derived from listening to fiery and impassioned speeches, but rather, from an awareness and urgency evinced from just seeing the example of an ordinary Jew serving Hashem with pure, unmitigated devotion. Extraordinary kindness, modestly performed without fanfare or acclaim, can inspire more than the most powerful mussar shmues, ethical discourse. Horav A. Henschel Leibowitz, zl, cites the Midrash's commentary to the above pasuk to substantiate this idea.

Chazal relate the following story: During the reign of David HaMelech, the country was plagued by a drought and ensuing famine, causing numerous deaths. Hashem told David that this was punishment for two sins: for the murder of the Givonim; and for not properly eulogizing Shaul HaMelech. David set out to correct the infractions. He proceeded to beg forgiveness from the Givonim, executing the five people responsible for their deaths. He left their bodies hanging for seven months to demonstrate the severity of their sin. Concerning Shaul HaMelech's eulogy, he felt that since the twelve-month mourning period had elapsed, it was not halachically feasible to eulogize him properly. The famine did not subside. When David heard of the incredible chesed, kindness, performed by Ritzpah bas Ayah, who did not rest for the entire seven months that the five bodies remained hanging, he said, "If a commoner can perform such an act of chesed, then he, the Melech, King, of Yisrael, can do the same for Shaul. He had Shaul's body exhumed and placed in a coffin. He personally accompanied the coffin throughout the entire Eretz Yisrael, and he eulogized the late king. The drought finally ended.

The Rosh Yeshiva probes what had influenced David's change of mind. He had certainly researched halachah and found it impermissible to eulogize Shaul. Yet, after hearing about Ritzpah's act of chesed, he reversed his decision. This, Rav Henschel explains, is the power of a lesson derived from seeing the example set by a simple, well-meaning person. The selfless act of chesed performed by Ritzpah motivated David to review the halachah and derive a way to eulogize Shaul. This added inspiration created a difference. Rav Henschel derives two lessons from Chazal: Man's ability to achieve greater depth and understanding if there is added inspiration; this greater motivation can be catalyzed by the decency, piety, virtue and selfless caring manifest by an ordinary woman, who acted in the manner she felt was necessary.

I never cease to be amazed by the sincerity and devotion expressed by individuals who, after having lived a life on the fringe of society, have decided that they have reached the end of their rope, and it is now time to return home. I share with the reading public a letter of gratitude I received from a Jewish prisoner, age 45, who will be "visiting" with the state of

Pennsylvania for the immediate future. Please disregard the spelling and grammatical errors. They are uncorrected on purpose.

8/18/09

Hi my name is Brian.

I am the youngest of three boys born 1964 in Newark, N.J. My mother and father were both traditional Jews. My grandparents on my mother's side kept a kosher house. My grandmom on my father's side passed two years before I was born. My only experience with my family's history and faith growing up was on holidays and weddings and funerals. I have lived the past 30 thirty years in and out of legal issues. On 2007 Sept. 23 I was placed in a county jail in Pike County, PA at which time I contacted a Rabbi at Temple Israel in Stroudsburg, PA to start my quest in my faith.

Well at which time I went thru all the proper channels with the facility only to have the warden turn the materials down which the rabbi had brought to me. Since I have been moved to Albion State Prison, and low and behold, my request to God has been fulfilled. I am now in a group of brothers directed by a very schooled educator. Rabbi L.Scheinbaum has help direct me in my Torah studys and I am now learning to be very greatfull for what I have and humble because of my studys. I am now able to learn what my great grand pop study and taught as a young man in Russia. I have started Torah class and started my daily studys, putting on the Tefillin on a daily basis, and respecting the Sabbath. I hope to gain more knowledge in time to come and become a respectfull orthodox Jew and able to teach my children to do the same. I finally feel at peace within. This is a blessing which might sound strange because of my current living place being a prison, but, in reality, I am not in a prison, do to my open mind and help from my brothers. I am so very greatfull.

Brian

For it is a meal-offering of jealousy, a meal-offering of remembrance, a reminder of iniquity. (5:15)

What is the meaning of *mazkeres avon*, "a reminder of iniquity"? Why is the Torah underscoring the need to remember her iniquity? The Midrash makes two intriguing statements that give the individual something to consider, especially when the enticement to sin enters his mind. The Sifri Zuta states that two remembrances are considered: her sin; and the sin of her parents who raised her. This is a powerful statement which begs elucidation. We all know fine, upstanding, devoted, well-meaning parents, who were always there and who simply did not "make it" with one or more of their children. Despite their best, untiring efforts to deal with every issue as it hit them squarely in the face; they still did not succeed. We never give up. We always hope that a child will eventually turn around and be the cause of much nachas. How can we place the onus of guilt at the parent's feet? Why make a blanket statement that the iniquity is dual - both the woman in question and her parents? This seems to be a harsh oversimplification of a tragedy.

Having worked with a number of such challenges, I think the answer lies in the Hebrew vernacular used by the Sifri. Chazal say: *Mazkir avonah*, "a reminder of her sin," *va'avon avosehah*, "and the iniquity of her 'fathers,'" *shegidlu osah*, "who raised her." It should have rather said, *shechinchu*, "who educated her." Why write *gidlah*, which, when translated, literally means, "who made her big," from the word *gadol*, large, when *chinuch*, education, is probably more appropriate?

Perhaps Chazal are alluding to the reason that this woman strayed from the path of morality. It did not happen overnight. When someone would point out a "problem" regarding their daughter to her parents, they would respond by "making her bigger," playing up her positive qualities and totally ignoring the negative realities concerning her licentious behavior. Yes, some parents gloss over their child's negative choices in life. Rather than be compelled to deal with the ramifications of the information they are hearing, they would rather ignore the message or degrade the messenger. The alternative would mean accepting responsibility and accepting the reality that they have a problem. Either burying their collective heads in the ground or "building up" their child as a way of denying the negative information establishes culpability against the parents. They could have helped, but they chose not to do so. They

"enlarged" their child, so that they could dispute what was glaringly real about him. They could have been mechanech, educated him, but instead, they were "megadel," made him bigger. They ignored it then; they cannot ignore it now.

Mazkeres avon, "a reminder of iniquity," is alternatively explained by the Midrash HaChofatz to mean that all of her previous sins are weighed in at this point. This is analogized to an ox that fell ill. At that point, the owner grabs hold of a chafef, shechitah/ ritual slaughterer's knife, and prepares to slaughter the ox before it dies and becomes a neveilah, defiled and unkosher. Likewise, when the Sotah's iniquity is revealed, it is not just this one sin that is discussed. Everything else that she has done - which perhaps did or did not lead up to this tragic moment - is addressed.

This is the way it is. When one is bad, people seem to remember all of the inappropriate things that he had previously done. They rarely remember his positive choices, his acts of loving kindness. Perhaps there have been none or they have been eclipsed by his evil. In any event, we tend to remember a person's mistakes - not his successes. The mistakes we make are ultimately ours, for which we will pay.

No one will remember the good that we have done - just the bad. This is something that should course through our minds the next time the yetzer hora seeks to subvert our forward/upward spiritual mobility.

You shall give them to the Leviim, each man according to his work. (7:5)

"Each man according to his work" appears as an innocuous statement, but it is much more. Every individual has his own unique mission in life, his own particular destiny which cannot be performed by anyone else. "Reuven's" contribution is unlike that of "Shimon." It is essential that we all realize and address our own avodah, service, our specific pekudah, appointed task. We have each been endowed with individual qualities that we must put to use in carrying out our mission in life. "According to his work" can carry various meanings, such as mission, destiny, and contribution. In the Zichronos section of the mussaf Shemoneh Esrai of Rosh Hashanah, we say, Maase ish u'pekudaso, "(The remembrances of every created thing passes before You) the deeds of a man, and his appointed task." Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, observes that herein is implied that we are being judged on two scales: maase ish, according to our actual performance of the mitzvos; and pekudaso, according to whether we fulfilled the task for which we were uniquely created. The legendary architect of Torah in America would often add that he was not sure which of the two judgments is more severe. Even if our tally of prohibitive activity is clean, we still have no clear indication that we will not receive a strict judgment if we have not fulfilled the purpose for which Hashem created us.

He would cite a classic example to prove his point. Navos HaCarmeli was a righteous man who died a terrible death at the hands of the evil Achav and his wife, Izevel. Why should such a virtuous man warrant such a tragic end? The Yalkut Shimoni attributes it to him neglecting his mission. It seems that Navos had a beautiful melodious voice, and, as such, he would lead the services in Yerushalayim during every festival. One Yom Tov, without good reason, he decided not to go to Yerushalayim. Therefore, he did not lead the people in prayer. This interruption of his practice of glorifying Hashem's Name left a bad taste in the hearts and minds of those whom he had so often inspired. They were disappointed, since his prayers were so much a part of the festival experience. Rav Shraga Feivel would conclude, "When you are not fulfilling your task for which you were created, you have missed your raison d'etre." We are all here for a reason, one determined for us by Hashem. We should all think hard and long what that purpose may be and pursue it.

A person's mission might consist of an experience which, for the most part, is very difficult for most people to handle. Yet, in His infinite wisdom, Hashem has selected him to experience this tribulation. Most others would snap from the pressure imposed by this ordeal. Hashem feels that he can handle the pressure. If the person understands that this is Hashem's choice for him, however, then this experience becomes his raison d'etre. This is

why he was created! It is not merely a test. It is the real thing. It is why he is here.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the story of a Torah scholar who is blessed with eight children, of which only three are healthy. He literally spends his entire day addressing the individual needs of his children. He does this joyfully, without complaint. He never tires, he is always filled with energy and boundless love. When asked how he is able to cope with what must be a great challenge, he responds, "This is my mission in life. Hashem has determined that I should spend my time caring for those of my children who are physically challenged. So be it. He has blessed me with three perfectly healthy children that are for me a great source of joy and nachas. Who am I to question the Ribono Shel Olam? Every one has a mission. This is mine."

He added, "From the day that our first son was born, when it was clear that he was born with a serious congenital ailment that was genetic, an indication that this illness could present itself in future children, we accepted it with resolve and determination. If this is what Hashem had in store for us, we would accept it and carry out our mission. This is why we were blessed with three healthy children - because of our attitude. Ish kefi avodaso, 'each man according to his work.'"

Rav Zilberstein notes that just as every person has his own unique mission in life, every moment allotted to us also has its own unique purpose. Shlomo HaMelech says in Koheles 3, Lakol zman v'eis l'chol cheifatz, tachas haShomayim, "Everything has its own season, and there is a time for everything under the Heaven." We all have our own moments, periods in our lives during which we are tested. The reaction to the challenge determines our essence. Furthermore, how we react defines the moment.

The following story will explain this. A number of years ago, a Torah scholar in Eretz Yisrael was widowed. His children lost their mother, and their community lost a woman of valor whose home and heart was always open, ready to listen, to help, to act on their behalf. Death was sudden and, thus, traumatic for the husband and the sizeable family of orphans left bereft of their mother. It was Erev Shabbos, and the funeral had to be arranged in a timely manner. The family lived in Tel Aviv, and burial was outside of Yerushalayim. During the funeral service, as the eulogies were being given in honor of the deceased, tragedy struck again as their sixteen year-old son suddenly collapsed and died. The tragedy was overwhelming. In the midst of dealing with the death of his wife, the husband and father was stricken with another tragedy of epic proportion. No words can describe the scene, the pain, the confusion, the mind-numbing shock that prevailed.

The first person to put his emotions aside and to gather his strength together was the father, who was reeling from the double loss. He immediately made arrangements to have his son buried next to his mother. They would both enter into Gan Eden hours apart, before Shabbos. He then gathered his children together and said the following words, "My dear children, we have just been struck twice. The pain is immense, and the need to mourn is great. There will be time to weep, to bemoan our losses, both individually and collectively, but now we must address the immediate needs of burying Mommy and Yanki. We must reach Yerushalayim in time, so that we can conduct both funerals without entering into a question of chillul, desecration, of Shabbos. Afterwards, we will mourn."

The "moment" demanded a controlled response spoken from strength. It would have been much easier and probably more soothing to let it all out, to fall apart, but, as the father told his children: This is what must be done at this moment. There will be other moments, later opportunities, to bewail the terrible losses. This is what Hashem wants from us now.

The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nachshon ben Aminadav, of the tribe of Yehudah. (7:12)

In a very telling Midrash, Chazal depict for us the scene at the banks of the Yam Suf, Red Sea, following Klal Yisrael's liberation from Egypt. The various tribes contended with each other concerning who would have the "privilege" to enter first into the sea. This preceded the miracle of the splitting of the sea. Yam Suf was a deep sea which would drown anyone who entered. Yet, they all believed that Hashem would do what was

necessary for them. Moshe Rabbeinu had told them not to worry - Hashem would fight for them. They were prepared to either die for Him - or to live for Him. Regardless of the consequences of their action, they were prepared. During the dispute among the tribes, Nachshon ben Aminadov walked over to the waters and leapt in. It was for this reason that Hashem elevated him and his tribe above the others, designating him to be the first to offer the korbanos, offerings, in honor of the Chanukas, Inauguration, of the Mishkan. What did Nachshon do that was so compelling? He took the initiative. Is that so impressive?

In the Talmud Bava Basra 10b, Chazal relate that when Rav Yosef took ill and slipped into a comatose state, his soul temporarily took leave of his body and ascended to Heaven. When he regained consciousness, he told his father, Rav Yehoshua, Olam hafuch ra'isee, "I saw an inverted world. The ones who are uppermost in this world are below in the World To Come." His father responded, "You have seen a well-ordered world." This is because material possessions and achievements have no significance in the World To Come.

Tosfos points out that this "inverted world" is a reference to Shmuel and Rav Yehudah. In this world, Shmuel was the mentor with Rav Yehudah sitting before him as a student. In the World To Come it was turned around, with Shmuel sitting in the position of student. Why? Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, cites an incident related in the Talmud Shabbos 55a, which illuminates why the student in this world became the rebbe in the World of Truth. "Rav Yehudah was once sitting in front of his rebbe, Shmuel, when a woman entered his court, crying out about an injustice committed against her. Shmuel paid no attention to her. Rav Yehudah could not understand this, and asked, 'Does Master not hold that he who closes his ears to the outcry of the poor, he, too, will call out and not be answered (Mishlei 21:13)?' Shmuel's basic response was that Mar Ukva, who was the head of the Bais Din was the only one who had the power to alleviate this woman's pain. It was, thus, his ultimate responsibility to right the wrong committed against this woman. Shmuel should not have given this response. Therefore, in Olam Haba, Rav Yehudah, the student, is above, and Shmuel, the rebbe, is below.

Rav Pincus asserts that the reason Shmuel is "deposed" in the World to Come is that he indicated that in this world there are sedarim, defined parameters, due process, a system that aligns itself with sequence and order. Rav Yehudah did not dispute that there needs to be such a system; it is only that, at times, it is necessary to alter or override the system. When a destitute, broken woman complains that she has been wronged, she should not be passed along to the proper authority. "It is not my job," "I do not work in this department," etc., are some of the more common, lame excuses we often hear. Boundaries are meant to be respected, but, when necessary, one must stand up and take the initiative and be a poretz geder, break the boundary. Of course, this is only for constructive and positive purposes. Otherwise, the individual is destructive, acting in a manner which can lead to anarchy.

Nachshon ben Aminadov broke the rules. Progress is important. Dialogue is necessary. When Klal Yisrael was standing at the banks of the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army about to strike against them, and Hashem said to "move on," there was no time for a discussion concerning who should go first. It was a time for action - not for a meeting. It was a time to break the rules. Therefore, Nachshon was rewarded with offering the first korban. He took the initiative. He deserved to go first.

Rav Pincus cites the Talmud Chullin 7a in which is found the well known concept, makom hinichu lo avosav l'hisgadeir bo, "His forefathers left him a place in which to distinguish himself." This means that, at times, Hashem will bring about an "error" to make available an opportunity for a descendant or someone else to distinguish himself by correcting it. Every generation brings with it challenges that had not been manifest in the previous generation. This phenomenon ensures that future generations have the opportunity to distinguish themselves. This is obvious throughout history.

There has never been so much Torah study going on as we experience in present times. Everybody is learning. This is because individuals in each

generation saw something that needed to be corrected, and they acted. Perhaps, when they undertook their endeavor, they had detractors who disagreed with their idea, approach, method - but they plugged and succeeded beyond anyone's imagination. These were individuals who, like Nachshon, refused to accept the status quo, and they acted with determination and resolve. The naysayers were divided into categories: those who were negative; those who were indifferent; those who actively attempted to prevent their success - either because they were afraid of success or because they resented the fact that it was not their own initiative. We can only thank those who had the vision and fortitude to ignore them.

Having said this, I would like to touch on what might be considered a controversial subject, or rather, a topic which many of us refuse to acknowledge. To some, it does not exist, and to others, it does not involve them: out of sight, out of mind. I am referring to the community within the community of boys and girls who live on the fringe of Yiddishkeit, who are labeled, "at risk," as well as the "graduates" of the community who are no longer at risk, because they have already gone over the deep end and rejected the tradition in which they had been raised. I am not addressing the causes nor the necessary remedy, but rather, the attitude that seems to prevail concerning those who care and are willing to reach out and grant these teenagers what they need the most: understanding and love. Once having gone this far, let us go to the next level and talk about those who see to the spiritual and emotional needs of Jews incarcerated in prisons and other types of restricted environments. I am not writing about this because I am one of them, but after having been involved with Jewish prisoners for a number of years, I have a first hand perception of how the Jewish community feels about anybody who does not "fit" into the strict parameters of tradition - and their attitude toward those who reach out to help them. Rather than belabor the issue and intimate any form of critique, I will relate the following story which occurred concerning a "mainstream" Rosh Yeshivah. In fact, he was the individual who probably impacted the derech ha'limud, methodology of Torah study, in the yeshivah world more so than any other rosh yeshivah before or after him. Perhaps the next time we view those who "reach out" as being "atypical," not "mainstream," or - as I refer to them - the modern day Nachshon ben Aminadovs, our reaction might be different.

Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, popularly known as Rav Chaim Brisker, was a true kanai, zealot, about causes and especially those which involved expressing love for a fellow Jew. A young woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy once presented herself at the threshold of his home and whimpered, "I am alone with nothing to eat." Rav Chaim asked his Rebbetzin why the women of the town were not reaching out to this lonely, poor woman. His wife did not respond and pretended not to have heard the question.

Rav Chaim began probing, searching for a reason why this woman's plight was being ignored. Finally, the Rebbetzin disclosed that this woman's husband had abandoned her some eleven months earlier. Need I say more? They were simply reacting the way most upstanding, self-absorbed Jews would react. I guess Rav Chaim was "different." He said, "How much more so should we help! She is all alone with nowhere to turn. Hurry and prepare a room for her where she will be our guest for the next few weeks, and then we will provide a monthly stipend for her and her child for the next two years."

Two weeks later a bris was held at the home of the Rav of Brisk. After all, that is where the child's mother was living. There is really very little I can add to this story.

Va'ani Tefillah

Va'yevarech David es Hashem l'einei kol ha'kahal.

And David blessed Hashem in the presence of the entire congregation.

In order to understand this tefillah and its purpose, it is necessary to be aware of its background. Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, very beautifully depicts the history behind "Va'yevarech David." As cited in Divrei Ha'Yamim, this tefillah was recited by David at the public coronation of his son and successor, Shlomo. It was David's hope that Shlomo would be

more than just the Jewish monarch; he hoped that he would one day become Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Indeed, if certain "relative" infractions had not been committed, he would have achieved this unprecedented milestone. Regrettably, three thousand years later, we still await the advent of Moshiach.

David made the above declaration/prayer, because he was concerned that with all of the glory and majesty surrounding Shlomo's ascension to the throne, the people would lose sight of the true purpose of Moshiach: the universal knowledge and acceptance of Hashem. With all of the talk about Moshiach, the "when, whom, and where," the average Jew tends to forget the Hashem factor in the equation. As David HaMelech reminded the people, we should take a moment, step back, and focus on the true purpose of Moshiach: the revelation of Hashem's existence to all mankind.

Sponsored in loving memory of our dear father and zaidy on his yahrtzeit Rabbi Shlomo Silberberg HaRav Shlomo ben Nossan z"l niftar 14 Sivan 5759 t.n.tz.v.h.
Zev Aryeh & Miriam Solomon & Family

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Naso: Three Priestly Blessings

Birkat Kohanim

Aaron and his descendants the kohanim were commanded to bless the Jewish people with three special blessings:

"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: This is how you must bless the Israelites. Say to them:

May God bless you and watch over you.

May God make His presence enlighten you, and grant you grace.

May God lift His face toward you, and grant you peace." (Num. 6:23-26)

The third blessing, however, is not so clear. What does it mean that God will "lift His face toward you"?

The Need for Special Consideration

While the first blessing refers to the material realm, the second blessing relates to our spiritual attainments. Greater enlightenment, however, brings with it additional responsibilities. As we gain knowledge and wisdom, we are expected to develop a higher level of moral sensitivity. Our thoughts should be purer, our character traits more refined, and our lives more spiritual.

If we take into account the consequential ethical demands, one may become apprehensive and even discouraged. In order to deflect this concern, the kohanim bestow a third blessing: "May God lift His face towards you."

To "lift one's face" is a Hebrew idiom meaning to give special consideration or leniency. The Torah commands a judge, for example, not to 'lift his face' towards one of the litigants (Lev. 19:15). The judge must be careful to avoid even the impression of favoring one side. The other litigant may feel that the case is already lost and lose heart.

The kohanim bless us that, despite the ethical expectations that come with increased enlightenment, we should not lose heart. God will be lenient, taking into account the physical reality in which we live.

One may, however, feel embarrassed or uneasy with this Divine leniency. Therefore, the final blessing ends with the gift of peace - peace of mind. "And may He grant you peace."

(Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 62)

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