

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from
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פרשת במדבר – שבועות
פרשת נשא

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Wishing all
כלל ישראל
א גוט יום טוב!

פרשת במדבר – שבועות

וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר (שמות י"ט:ב)

רש"י: כאן אחד כלל אחד

And Klal Yisrael camped at the foot of Har Sinai. [Rashi:] Like one man with one heart.

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַבְּכוֹר | נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיסָמָר (במדבר ג: ב)

These are the names of the sons of Aharon, the firstborn was Nadav, and Avihi, Elazar, and Isamar.

Nadav is a Dangling Modifier

The word הבכור in this *possuk* is a dangling modifier. It can be read with together with the following word, *Nadav*, or with the preceding word, *Aharon*. If we read it with the following word the meaning of the *possuk* would be, 'These are the names of the sons of Aharon; the firstborn was Nadav'. If it is read with the preceding word it would mean 'These are the names of the sons of Aharon who was the firstborn; Nadav and Avihi, Elazar and Isamar'. The Baal Haturim writes that in fact it should be read together with Aharon and he proves this from the fact that in the Chumash there is a dividing line called a פסיק between the words הבכור and נדב. Thus, the *possuk* should be read: ואלה שמות בני אהרן הבכור, and these are the names of the sons of Aharon who was the *bechor* (to his own mother). Afterwards the *possuk* begins listing the names of Aharon's sons beginning with Nadav.

The Baal Haturim explains that since Nadav died without any children his status as the *bechor* does not change anything. No one would get the extra portion which is due to the *bechor*. As such, the *possuk* can only be telling us that it was Aharon who was the *bechor*, hence the reading 'these are the names of the sons of Aharon who was the *bechor*'.

We can ask a question on this Baal Haturim. When we *lein* these words from the Torah there is an *atnaha*, a pause, under the word *Nadav*. This implies that the word *Nadav* is the last word of the first phrase, and the second phrase begins with the word *Avihu*. It sounds like it should be read 'אלה שמות בני אהרן הבכור נדב', *These are the names of the sons of Aharon; the firstborn was Nadav, (the others were) Avihi, Elazar and Isamar*'. If it is true that the word *habechor* goes back on Aharon as the Baal Haturim writes, then why do we pause after the word *Nadav* indicating otherwise?

Nadav and Avihi Were Each Doing Their Own Private Avodah

We can answer this based on a perspective from R' Chaim Shmulevitz on the sin of Nadav and Avihi.

The *possuk* says: ויקחו בני אהרן נדב ואביהוּא אֵשׁ מִחֹתָם וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עֲלֶיהָ קֶטֶרֶת (ויקרא י:א), *And the sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihi, each took their pan and put fire in them, and they put ketores in them*. If we look carefully at the wording of the *possuk* we will note that it says 'they took אֵשׁ מִחֹתָם' each his own pan. It does not say 'אֵשׁ מִחֹתָם' they took their pans in the plural. The *Midrash* explains that this implies that this *avodah* was *mevusha*, they did not ask each other's opinion. In other words, they did not perform their *avodah* with *achdut* as one unit, rather they were each doing their own private *avodah*, and it was this fault which brought about their ultimate demise.

On *Shavous* night R' Chaim Shmulevitz would speak for the Yeshiva and he would say: "A Yeshiva is not a place where two hundred individuals learn Torah! We are one unit made of two hundred parts! We must be *mekabel Torah* כאיש אחד בלב אחד."

He would then go on to stress the importance of being *mevusha* עם חבריו, of sharing our friend's burdens, which is one of the *kinyanei Torah*. He would say that truly feeling the pain of another brings back the reality of אחד which is a crucial prerequisite for *Kabolas HaTorah*.

Achdut Saves Lives

This *inyan* of *achdut* can truly save lives as is demonstrated by the fact that R' Akiva's *talmidim* died because they were lacking in this area 'שלא נהגו כבוד זה בזה', they did not accord each other the proper honor.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת במדבר – שבועות

When I was a bochur in Mir Yeshiva in Brooklyn there was a time where three bochurim each lost a parent within thirty days of each other. The bochurim were beginning to feel despondent and downcast and they approached the mashgiach R' Tzvi Hirsh Feldman for chizuk. The mashgiach told them that this happened because they were not properly mekayem the inyan of עִם הַבִּירוֹ נוֹשָׂא בְעוֹל עִם הַבִּירוֹ. When the first bochur experienced this tragedy the rest of the bochurim were too quick to move on with their lives, and they did not spend enough time thinking about and feeling this boy's pain. Had they done so, then it would have been considered as though they themselves already shared in the first boy's loss, and there would have been no need for further suffering. Because they didn't, the unfortunate result was that it happened to another boy and then another.

Perhaps this is why there is a pause between the word Nadav and Avihu. The word *habechor* in the *possuk* is referring to Aharon as the Baal Haturim says. However, we also pause between Nadav and Avihu to demonstrate that their death was due in part to their lack of אחדות. Had they worked together as one they would have been saved.

This is a fascinating lesson on the importance of אחדות, and it is an important preparation for Shavous when we hope to reach the level of אחד בלב אחד, כאיש אחד בלב אחד.

Below, we will explore another important angle of this אחדות from the *pesukim* about Nadav and Avihu.

וַיָּמָת נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא לִפְנֵי ד' בְּהִקְרָבָם אֲשֶׁר זָרָה לִפְנֵי ד' בַּמִּדְבָּר סִינִי וּבָנִים לֹא-הָיוּ לָהֶם וַיָּבָהוּ
אֶלְעָזָר וְיִסְמָר עַל-פְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן אֲבִיהֶם: (במדבר ג:ד)

Nadav and Avihu died before Hashem when they offered a strange fire before Hashem in the Midbar, and they had no children. And Elazar and Isamar served before Aharon their father.

Why Did Nadav and Avihu Die?

The *possuk* seems to be telling us two unrelated facts: Firstly, Nadav and Avihu died because they brought a strange offering to Hashem, and secondly, they did not have any children. However, the Gemara (יבמות) explains that these two things were connected. The reason they died is because they did not perform the *mitzvah* of having children.

How do we understand this? The *possuk* clearly tells us that they died because they brought a strange offering. How could the Gemara contradict this statement by saying that they actually died because they had no children?

Hatzolah and Car Insurance

To answer this question let us first contemplate the following idea.

Everyone is thankful for the existence of Hatzolah. When someone falls or gets into an accident, or if someone r"l has a heart attack we are grateful to be able to avail ourselves of Hatzolah's services to save this person's life. However, perhaps as a community we should invest in better systems in order to do away with the need for Hatzolah altogether.

Perhaps we should hire personal dieticians for every member of the community in order to ensure that everyone eats a healthy, balanced diet. We should also make healthy foods readily available at a low cost, and we should encourage daily exercise. In this way we could put an end to all health-related emergencies such as heart attacks etc. Additionally, we should raise community awareness about the dangers of speeding and of distracted driving along with other measures which would make our community much safer. In this way we could prevent car crashes and the like from occurring in the first place and thus avoid the need for Hatzolah to begin with.

Alternatively, imagine if someone would say that he has decided not to purchase driver's insurance. He insists that he is a safe driver, and he would never get into a car crash. And if another unsafe driver crashes into him, that person's insurance will foot the bill.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת במדבר – שבועות

These are obviously bad ideas. Even though it is certainly important to be healthy and safe, these measures still could not take the place of Hatzolah and of buying car insurance. The reason is because no matter how safe and healthy we are, there is always still the possibility of something going wrong. Even a healthy person could still end up in a medical emergency, and even the safest driver could possibly lose control of his car and end up in a car crash. Thus, no matter how healthy and safe we are, we will still need the services of Hatzolah and of car insurance.

The same is true regarding our *Avodas Hashem*. A person can never know with one hundred percent certainty that he is doing everything correctly. Everyone makes mistakes and no one is perfect. Therefore, it is important to take out an 'insurance plan' with Hashem as we will explain.

Hashem Is a Righteous Judge

The *possuk* in *Haazinu* says: (קל אמונה ואין עול צדיק וישר הוא (דברים, לב: ד'), *He is a G-D of faith without atrocity, righteous and straight He is*. The Torah describes Hashem as someone who does not commit atrocities. How is this a praise to Hashem? The fact that he does not commit atrocities does not seem like a virtue which is so great that it is the praise of Hashem. What is the meaning of this *possuk*?

R' Elya Lopian explained with the following story.

There was a widow who had five children living with her at home. In order to make ends meet she had an illegal liquor business in her basement aside from her regular day job. Unfortunately, she was caught by the police and she was arrested due to her illegal business.

At her trial, her lawyer presented the following argument to the judge: "You cannot sentence this woman to prison because then who will take care of her five children?"

The judge, however, was unimpressed. He said, "This is a courthouse not a community center. It is not my business what to do with her children. My only responsibility is to uphold the law and since this woman broke the law it is my duty to sentence her to prison."

This is the way of human judges; Hashem, however, has a different system. Hashem will not punish someone if this would cause undue damage to another person. Hashem is a קל אמונה, a faithful judge, but He is also ואין עול, He does not commit atrocities. Therefore, if a person deserves to die but he has children at home who do not deserve to be orphans, this person's life will be saved. Similarly, any punishment which a person deserves but would cause pain to another person who does not deserve it will not be carried out.

Taking Out 'Insurance' with Hashem

Therefore, says R' Elyah, a person should see to it that he is a much-needed member of the community. He should join committees and other groups and he should have them rely on his services, and in this way, he could save his life. This is because even if he deserves to die, he will be saved because these groups will need him. Hashem will therefore not take his life because it would cause undue damage to these groups.

Based on this *vort* we can understand the Gemara in *Yevamos*. It is true that Nadav and Avihu died because they offered a strange offering to Hashem. However, if they would have performed the *mitzvah* of having children, they could have saved their lives! Even though they themselves deserved to die, if they would have had children those children would not have deserved to be orphans. Thus, although the main reason for their death was their strange offering, it was also partly due to the fact that they had no children.

We Are Truly Are Connected כאיש אחד

This teaches us a very powerful lesson about the nature of *Klal Yisrael*. By working together with other *yidden* we truly become כאיש אחד! We expand the scope of our lives and we become fundamentally interconnected with other *yidden*. Our lives can be saved because we are connected with the lives of other *yidden*!

We can take this even further. It is possible that when one *yid* serves Hashem with extra vigor, he is actually saving the life of another *yid*.

If Reuven finds himself in a place that is filled with tumah and he does not fall prey to his Yetzer hara he is thus deserving of great reward. If in an unrelated story his friend would deserve to die but this would cause Reuven pain and anguish which he does not deserve due to the great levels he has just achieved, his friends' life will be spared!

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת נשא

What a powerful thought! The private *avodas Hashem* of one *yid* can have such a powerful effect on other *yidden* that it can even save their lives. We truly are אחד כאיש אחד!

Let us keep these lessons in mind as we prepare for *Kabolas Hatorah*. We must be *mechazek* our feelings of love and connection with all other *yidden*. We must learn to be בעל חסד, to truly feel the pain of others as if it were our own. If we can truly feel באהדות with all other *yidden* then we will be prepared to relive the experience of שם ישראל נגד ההר.

פרשת נשא

כָּל-הַבָּא לַצִּבְּאָה לַעֲבֹד עִבְדָּהּ בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד (שם פסוק כ"ג)

All who come to join the multitude, to perform the work in the Ohel Moed

וַיֵּשֶׁם לָךְ שָׁלוֹם (ו' כ"ו)

And He [Hashem] should establish for you peace

This *parshah* begins with the counting of the different families among the Shevet Levi. This count had already begun in the last *parshah* with the children of Kehas, and in this *parshah*, the counting continued for the children of Gershon and Merari. The Ohr Hachaim notes several differences in the language used by the Torah among these various families. We will focus bs"d on two of them:

The Bnei Kehos Handled the Primary Components of the Mishkan, While Bnei Gershon Handled the Secondary Aspects

The first *diyuk* is as follows:

When describing the task of Bnei Kehos, the *passuk* says (ד' ג') **לַעֲבֹד לַצִּבְּאָה** לעשות מלאכה באהל מועד *all who come to the multitude, to perform the work in the Ohel Moed*. The single word **לַצִּבְּאָה** / *to the multitude* is used. Regarding the Bnei Gershon, however, the *passuk* uses a double expression. **לַעֲבֹד עִבְדָּהּ בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד** כל הבא לַצִּבְּאָה **צָבָא** לעבד עבדה באהל מועד *all who come to join the multitude to serve the function in the Ohel Moed*. Why did the Torah change its term?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that this was based on the difference in the nature of the service being performed. Regarding the Bnei Kehos who dealt with the actual content of the Mishkan, i.e. the *Aron* and *keilim* of the Mishkan, the Torah states that they came **לַעֲבֹד**, which can also mean *for the service*. The Bnei Gershon, on the other hand, handled the coverings and the curtains which were there to cover and protect the *Aron* and *Keilim*. This task is described by the *passuk* as **צָבָא**, which can mean *to serve that which is the service*.

The *passuk* then is stressing that the Bnei Kehos were involved in what was the fundamental point and purpose of the Mishkan, the *keilim*; whereas the Bnei Gershon dealt with the accessories to those *keilim*. Apparently, it was important for these two families of Levi'im to be aware of this distinction between them, so they could approach their assigned tasks with the proper attitude. The Bnei Gershon needed to realize that they were involved in what was merely the secondary aspect of the Mishkan – the curtains, which were the 'helpers' to the primary aspect – the *keilim*.

Keeping Focus on the Primary Purpose in Life

This is a lesson which is important for our lives. It is so important that we ingrain into ourselves what is our purpose and what is secondary. As the Chasam Sofer explains on the *passuk* **אֶחָד שְׂאֵלְתִי מֵאֵת ד' אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ / One thing have I asked from Hashem, it I shall seek; that I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life**. The request is understandable. Dovid Hamelech davens that he should be able to constantly spend his life in the Beis Medrash. The question, though, is, how can Dovid claim that this is his only request that he makes? What about the entire Tehillim? He asks for all sorts of different things which cover the

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת נשא

whole range of his existence – health, family, recognition, money etc. Certainly, he asks for *ruchniyus*, but that is his only request?

The Chasam Sofer explains that although it is true that he asks for all different requests, there is still something unique about specifically this one request. What is this uniqueness? *It, I shall seek*. He had many requests, but they were not the end-goal; they were rather a means to reach a different goal. Only his *ruchniyus* was his actual goal.

Yitzi walks into a hardware store before Sukkos and tells the proprietor that he needs some nails.

"You don't need nails," the proprietor retorts, "you need a sukkah!"

"You're right," Yitzi concedes, "what I really need is a sukkah. But I don't have to waste your time telling you my whole series of intentions and goals. My immediate necessity is nails, and that is what is relevant to you."

In this illustration, it is clear that the nails that Yitzi needs are obviously a means to achieve his end-goal of building a *sukkah*. Dovid Hamelech, likewise, had a clear outlook on all his needs in life; they were a means to achieve his goal of serving Hashem and fulfilling His will. What Dovid really sought was to dwell in the House of Hashem. Everything else was a means to bring him toward this goal.

Focusing on Ratzon Hashem Rather than on our Own Selfish Needs

If we would all have this idea implanted firmly into our heads, how different could our lives look! We have so many different agendas and wants.

I need an extension on my house. I need a very large porch.

I need to have the latest model car.

I need the top shtellar in the yeshiva.

I must have maftir this week for yahrtzeit.

My opinion must carry the final say in the shul committee...

The list of people's different 'needs' and wants is endless. The common denominator is that each person has himself in mind.

If each person would desire what Hashem wants, it would be a completely different picture.

The extension in the house is so that the family members can have menuchas hanefesh in their Avodas Hashem. Perhaps they will be able to fulfill the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim more fully as well.

A car is a 'vehicle' to be able to carry out Ratzon Hashem in various places with efficiency. Of course, it can be respectable and decent looking, in order not to cause a chilul Hashem.

A shtellar is an opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of teaching Torah.

Maftir is to be a zechus for the niftar, thus fulfilling the mitzvah of Kibbud av v'eim.

A position in the shul committee is to help decide on what is the best manner for the kehillah to serve Hashem collectively.

When needs are approached with this frame of mind, there are no fights or insults, no *dinei Torah* or *-lehavdil-*secular courts, no *chilul Hashem*, etc. After all, the goal is *Ratzon Hashem*. Any of these manners of bringing forth the goal are certainly not *Ratzon Hashem*.

Approaching a Disagreement Properly

This does not mean there can never be disagreements. People will always have different opinions, and a person can state strongly what he believes is the correct idea/approach/answer etc. He can honestly feel that the other side is in the wrong. However, the question will be, how the two sides will deal with their disagreement. If they have intentions for *Ratzon Hashem*, they will try to resolve their disagreement through compromise, or by involving a third party. This will bring *shalom* between them, because the *rav* or other authority will show them what is correct or will help them compromise. It is when they are out for their own personal wants, without having *Ratzon Hashem* in mind, that the problems start. Then, whichever side is the 'loser' will simply ask another *rav*, until he gets the answer he wants.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת נשא

Taking a Drastic Step

One who has his goal set on *Ratzon Hashem* can take a drastic move when necessary.

I am personally familiar with quite a few incidents in which an adam gadol spearheaded a project from its inception and built it up to a major operation. However, after various people became involved and there was a question of becoming involved in fights and machlokes, the gadol withdrew from the project completely.

"But how can you back out when you put so much sweat and exertion into it?!"

"It makes no difference," they would say. "Then, it was Ratzon Hashem for me to begin the undertaking. Now, it is Ratzon Hashem for me to back away!"

This is not to say that such a move is easy; it may be exceedingly difficult, in fact. However, one who conducts his life with *Ratzon Hashem* as his compass, will take this difficult step because he understands that continuing with his agenda is the exact opposite of his true goal. In fact, this sort of action can be traced back to Yitzchok Avinu.

The Torah tells us how Yitzchok's servants discovered a well of water, only to have the servants of Avimelech claim that it was their water. Yitzchok's servants then opened a new well, only to have the scenario take place a second time as well. Finally, they opened a third well, '*Rechovos*', and this time they were left alone to benefit from their work.

We need to realize that these well were certainly not for simple, physical drinking of water; they rather represented great *ruchniyusdige* endeavors in which Yitzchok Avinu involved himself.

He built a beautiful yeshivah, where the bachurim learn with such cheshek and hasmadah, and the rebbeim give shiurim which teach and inspire. The yeshiva was such a success – until an opponent turned up and contended that the yeshiva was his. When the matter began to turn ugly, what did Yitzchok do? He picked himself up and walked away! He would not fight for this yeshiva because that would not increase kovod shamayim. Instead he moved on and started another yeshiva!

We can be certain that this time Yitzchok was not taking any chances. He had all the documents, certificates, licenses, and anything necessary to show that this was legitimately his. The yeshiva got off the ground, and then – another challenger turned up!

"How can you say it's yours?" Yitzchok surely argued. "I have all the documents in order. I'll show you clearly that it's mine!"

"No, no, these documents are meaningless..." The contender began with arguments, claims, and all different reasons why the yeshiva was really his.

What did Yitzchok do? He walked away a second time! Finally, the third yeshiva that he opened was blessed with peace from outside 'politics'. It was in this yeshiva that Yitzchok remained to fulfill Ratzon Hashem in its true form.

Not Getting Caught Up in our Own Agenda

When we remember what our true goal is, and we keep it as our focus, we will then not get carried away after our own agendas, as righteous as they may be. We will do what Hashem wants of us in each individual situation.

Around 30-40 years ago, there was a religious school that was to be opened outside Yerushalayim, in which secular studies would be taught. The gedolim of the time were very upset about this venture. Although the school was intended for children of weaker backgrounds, the gedolim felt that there was a strong risk that Yerushalmi children would be attracted to the school, causing their own level of chinuch to be undermined.

It so happened that the man who opened the school was a student of a certain American rosh yeshiva. It was understood that if this rosh yeshiva could be impressed of the gravity of the matter, he would have the power to influence the man to halt the plans. An opportune time arose for this rosh yeshiva to be apprised of the situation when he happened to visit Eretz Yisroel during this period.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת נשא

Rav Elazar Shach the leader of the Torah world, immediately made plans to travel from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim in order to speak to this rosh yeshiva. He arrived in Yerushalayim with his gabbai, and immediately made his way to the house in which the rosh yeshiva was staying. When he arrived, he was welcomed with open arms. The rebbitzen brought tea and cake, and they sat down in the apartment.

"To what do I owe this tremendous honor?" the rosh yeshiva asked warmly.

"Ich hub gekumen bazuchen (I came to visit)!"

They shmoozed for a few minutes, until the rosh yeshiva asked again what Rav Shach's purpose was in visiting. Again, Rav Shach waved off the question, saying that he had happened to be in the neighborhood, and he just stopped by to visit. This occurred several times more, until finally after around half an hour, Rav Shach got up to leave. The rosh yeshiva could not figure out why Rav Shach had come.

On the way back to Bnei Brak, Rav Shach's gabbai could not contain himself.

"I don't understand," he burst out. "You took four hours of your time and energy to make the trip to Yerushalayim, all in order to speak with this rosh yeshiva. Why did you not discuss the issue of the school?"

"I couldn't" Rav Shach explained, "because the rosh yeshiva's rebbitzen was in the room. It is not derech eretz to reproach a man in the presence of his wife. I was waiting for her to leave, but she stayed for the entire visit. I was therefore unable to discuss the matter for which I had come."

The gabbai was still disturbed. "Why couldn't you just ask the rebbitzen to step out for a few minutes?"

"What?!" Rav Shach exclaimed, "I should come to their house and throw her out? Absolutely not!"

"Ok, so why couldn't you ask the rosh yeshiva to step out with you?"

Rav Shach summarily rejected this suggestion as well. "In front of his wife, I should ask him to leave to discuss a matter privately with him? That is not derech eretz either. Out of the question!"

Rav Shach was never able to speak to this rosh yeshiva subsequently, and the matter remained unresolved.

It made no difference to Rav Shach that he had an important agenda, one for which he had made a special trip to Yerushalayim specifically for its purpose. No matter that the issue was of utmost importance for the future of the *Torahdige yidden* in Yerushalayim. It was not the *Ratzon Hashem* for him to act without *derech eretz*, and that was that.

'But what of all those Yerushalmi children who may be led astray?! They have the potential to become gedolei Yisroel, and they can now become goyim r"l! The whole future of Klal Yisroel is at stake!'

'It makes no difference. There is a great Ribbono Shel Olam who is responsible for Klal Yisroel. My job is to fulfill Ratzon Hashem. I cannot rebuke a man in front of his wife, I cannot ask her to step out, and I cannot pull him out. There is nothing I can do!'

We must live our lives with our focus on the *Ratzon Hashem*. Like Rav Shach, let us remember what is the לצבא and what is the לצבא. If we will do so, we will be able to accomplish what is correct in each situation, and we will be able to accomplish what is genuinely pleasing in the Eyes of Hashem.

The Diminished Stature of One Who is Involved in Machlokes

The second distinction which the Ohr Hachaim discusses between the language used for the countings of the families of Levi'im is also related to our present theme. Each count contained the number of thousands of Levi'im, and afterward the remaining Levi'im who were not included in the thousands. In the count of Bnei Gershon and Bnei Merari, there is a 'ו', implying the word 'and', which is used to connect these two numbers. (שלושת אלפים ומאתים (פסוק מ"ד). *three thousand and two hundred*. Only in the number of the Bnei Kehos is there no 'ו'. (שלוש אלפים ושבע מאות וחמשים (פסוק ל"ו). *two thousand, seven hundred and fifty*. Why is this difference found in their numbers?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that this difference is due to the presence of Korach in the family of Kehos. As Korach had done his terrible deed of rebelling against Moshe Rabbeinu, he was of a lower stature than the rest of the *shevet*. Not only Korach, explains the Ohr Hachaim, but his entire family shared his guilt. By virtue of

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת נשא

their connection to him, they automatically leaned toward him in their mind, even if on a minute level. At the very least, they were guilty of not protesting his actions.

How damaging is the *middah* of *machlokes*! Here again, Korach had his agenda, and would not allow anything in his way. If Moshe is the leader, he must be pushed aside! – When we lose sight of *kovod shamayim*, there is no telling where our actions will lead us.

The Dangers of Machlokes – For the Involved Parties and for All Those Near Them

As the Ohr Hachaim explains, not only the stature of Korach himself who instigated the *machlokes* was lowered, but all those who had connections and dealings with him were lowered as well. They were near the *machlokes*, and they got 'schlepped in'.

How tragic and unfortunate it is when we see even great people involved in a machlokes. They surely did not start it, and would never have wished for it, but they got pulled in by those around them – perhaps their talmidim or family members – and eventually they are completely embroiled in it.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz used to cry from the *bimah* about the dangers of *machlokes*. People will end up acting in ways that they would otherwise never dream of, all because they get pulled in the ugly *machlokes* and they cannot pull themselves out.

Rav Moshe Feinstein was one of the greatest talmidei chachamim of his generation – and also one of the most humble. He loved shalom with all his heart and was so careful not to involve himself in machlokes. He ordered his children and talmidim that if, chas v'shalom, he ever did become entangled in a machlokes, and he issued an instruction involving the machlokes, those who followed him should not do as he said, before checking with another gadol first. Only if the other gadol gave his approval should they follow his instructions.

Rav Moshe understood full well the danger of *machlokes* and how a person can say something which is completely not in line with the *Ratzon Hashem*, all for sake of the *machlokes*.

The Desire to Emerge Victorious

Rav Moshe would also say that when two people are arguing in a *din Torah* or any other such setting, even if they may have genuinely meant what they said and believed in their positions, that is only for the first few minutes. Afterward, the motivation is one thing only: to win the argument. It is difficult for a person to concede to himself and to others that he was wrong, and he will never retract from his position, even when the issue was decided against him.

The Beauty and Brachah of Shalom

In truth, it is so often not worth the *machlokes* at all. As the *Birchas Kohanim* in this *parshah* concludes, (וי' כ"ו) וישם לך שלום/Hashem will grant you peace. As Rashi in Parshas Bechukosai tells us, the final *brachah* is always peace, because it is equal to all other *brachos*. *Shalom*/peace is the biggest *brachah*, worth so much more than whatever issue is being fought over.

Even if the question is a becher over which Moshe Rabbeinu himself made kiddush, it is worthwhile to be mevater. There is no question that a life of shalom is far superior to making kiddush over Moshe Rabbeinu's becher!

A family that lives with shalom approaches a yerushah/inheritance with the exact opposite of machlokes.

'You take the car. I already have one and I don't need it!'

'No, you take it! You can use it much more than I can!'

Such a family lives such a beautiful existence together, with true love and caring between them. So different from those families which are torn apart by *machlokes*, so they can't speak to each other, or attend each other's simchos. Oy! Oftentimes, this will continue to their children and grandchildren, who do not even know what the original argument was about. And yet, they just keep on fighting. Oy, how terrible this is!

Shalom is the Only Receptacle for Brachah

The Ohr Hachaim on this *passuk* in *Birchas Kohanim* cites the final mishnah in Shas: לא מצא הקדוש ברוך /HaKadosh Boruch did not find a receptacle which will contain brachah for Yisroel other than peace.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
פרשת נשא

We can illustrate this with the following *mashal*:

Shloimy's mother asks him to go borrow some oil from the neighbor, Mrs. Greenstein. Shloimy takes a plastic shopping bag and knocks on Mrs. Greenstein's door.

She hears his request, and she scolds him. "How do you expect to bring oil home in this bag? Bring a jar that can hold oil!"

The next week, Shloimy's mother sends him back to Mrs. Greenstein, this time to borrow eggs. Not wishing to repeat his previous mistake, Shloimy brings a jar with him.

Mrs. Greenstein sees the jar, and she scolds him again, (this time a bit harder). "How are you going to take home eggs in a jar?! They will all crack! Bring an egg container!"

In order to hold an item, one must have the proper container. What, then, is the proper container for *brachah*?

Chaim is promised by a navi that Hashem will grant him brachah; but that he just needs to bring a container to take the brachah home.

Which container should Chaim get? A bag? A box? Perhaps a pickup truck?

Chazal reveal to us in this mishnah that there is only one effective container for bracha: *Shalom*/peace. If a person thinks that he can receive *brachah* otherwise, **he is a טועה בדבר משנה/erring about that which is an explicit mishnah!**

Chaim can try davening hard, learning well, doing chessed, fasting – or all of the above.

He thinks to himself, 'Now, I will surely merit to receive brachah!'

Unfortunately, though, he is mistaken. He may receive immense reward for all of those mitzvos, but they will not bring brachah. Only shalom can accomplish this.

We must make an effort to live with *shalom*, even by being *mevater* on what may be important to us. The *brachah* that will result, both for the parties involved as well as for Klal Yisroel, is far more important.

In Conclusion

Let us constantly remind ourselves to focus on the true goal in life – fulfilling Hashem's will. We must remember that any other goal is merely a means of achieving the main goal.

And let us not allow ourselves to become entangled in the ugly web of *machlokes*, thereby lowering our stature and causing destruction *chas v'shalom* for ourselves and all those around us. Let us rather do everything possible to have *shalom* in our midst, thus making ourselves worthy of receiving Hashem's *brachah*.

Bez"H we should be *zoche* to these *madreigos*, and we should be *zoche* to *bracha* and the *Geulah Shelaimah* for Klal Yisroel *bimheirah v'yameinu*.

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