

אור פני משה

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

*Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת נשא

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נתנדב לכבוד אדירי
ומחזיקי התורה

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הר"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצוק"ל

פרשת נשא

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יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנֶּנֶךָ: יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם:
(במדבר ו' כ"ה-כ"ו)

The Two 'Faces' of Hakadosh Baruch Hu

The middle *pasuk* of the *Birchas Kohanim* says: “יאר השם פניו” – *May Hashem illuminate His Face to you and be gracious to you*. The last *pasuk* has a similar reference to Hashem’s ‘Face’: “ישא” – *May Hashem lift His Face to you and establish peace for you*. These *pasukim* need explanation: first of all, what is the *pasuk* referring to when it says ‘Hashem’s Face’? Additionally, the Targum Onkelos translates the word “פניו” in the middle *pasuk* as ‘His Shechina’, while in the last *pasuk* he simply translates it as ‘His Face’. What are these two differing translations all about?

The Two Key Factors of a Healthy Relationship

I would like to answer based on what we discussed in the past in our Shalom Bayis series. We mentioned that there are two major factors that are critical for a healthy relationship between husband and wife: there’s the ‘work’ factor – the actual labors that one is obligated to do for his or her spouse; and there’s the ‘recognition’ factor – the positive words of affirmation, encouragement and recognition that one must frequently provide for his or her spouse.

For example, let’s take a wife who is terrible at keeping to her chores at home. There are piles of dishes in the sink, the counters are covered in remnants from the past week’s meals, the hampers are overflowing with dirty laundry, there’s never a decent meal ready on time, the floors are covered in grime – it’s a disaster. But, at the same time, this woman always smiles at her husband, tells him constantly how wonderful he is, compliments his accomplishments frequently and so on. While the positive expression and body language seem to be in the right place – they don’t make up for the severe lack in the

other major factor. This marriage will inevitably need a lot of fixing and rehabilitating. Conversely, if the house is always immaculate and all of the chores are done in a timely manner, but simultaneously – the wife is constantly in a bitter mood and treats her husband to frequent verbal attacks, complaints and other expressions of discontent, then the marriage is heading in the direction of a massive trainwreck.

This same analogy can be given with a husband, a Cheder Rabbi, an employee – whatever the relationship may be, the participant needs to provide his 'work' and his 'positive communication'. If one is missing, then the relationship cannot last.

Perhaps this is the idea that the *pasuk* in *Birchas Kohanim* is implying. The first mention of the word "פניו" is referring to the 'positivity' aspect of our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The *pasuk* says: "יאר השם פניו אליך ויהונך" – *May Hashem illuminate His Face to you and be gracious to you*, and Rashi explains: "יראה לך פנים שווקות", *He will present Himself to you with a 'joyful' face*. What is this 'joyfulness' all about? Perhaps it is referring to the ultimate pleasure, being "נהנה מזיו השכינה"; the blessing is that Hashem will shine down a wonderful experience of closeness to Him.

Let me give you an example of this kind of 'positive communication'. When Yosef was sold as a slave to a caravan of Arab merchants, he must have been feeling terrible. He was a *tzaddik*; he was Yaakov Avinu's prized *talmid*! And now, he was being transported in chains to the lowest country on the planet. It must have been an acutely painful experience. However, Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent Yosef a sign. Generally, Arab merchants would trade and sell "נפט" (kerosene) along with other products that have foul-smelling odors. However, this particular caravan was carrying נכאת וצרי ולוט – *spices, balsam and lotus*. Imagine pulling up to a gas station, and upon exiting the car, you notice that rather than smelling heavily of gasoline, the entire area is filled with the pleasant aroma of flowers. It turns out that this specific gas station no longer sells gasoline – they started selling flowers instead! That was precisely what happened with Yosef: instead of experiencing this excruciating journey along with acrid-smelling kerosene, he got to have pleasant-smelling spices as the backdrop. That was a 'positive communication' from Hashem; it was

a way of conveying the message to Yosef that Hashem was there with him, and that all of this pain was happening for a purpose.

The last *pasuk* in *Birchas Kohanim* was referring to the other aspect of the relationship: the 'work' factor. The *pasuk* says: "ישא השם" – *May Hashem lift His Face to you and establish peace for you*. This means that Hashem will look after each and every one of us and provide us with all of our needs.

How Can Hashem Grant Us Preferential Treatment?

The Gemara in *Brachos* actually points out that the words "ישא השם פניו" imply a form of preferential treatment, so to speak. The Gemara says that the *Malachim* asked from a *pasuk* in Tanach that expressly states that Hashem is not a "נושא פנים", as this can appear as a form of injustice. The Gemara proceeds to say that Hashem answered as follows: "How can I not be "נושא פנים" to Klal Yisroel? I wrote in the Torah that they must only *bentsch* upon becoming fully satiated, whereas they are *makpid* to *bentsch* even on a *k'zayis*!"

Let me explain this answer with a *mashal*:

There are two fellows who are partners in business. They jointly own a store that sells silverware, dishes and the like. One day, a man walks into the shop and selects a set of dishes to purchase. As he is about to check out, one of the owners offers him the set for below cost price. His partner overhears the conversation and immediately interjects: "Wait a minute! Why are you giving it to him for so cheap?"

The other owner explains that this man davens in the same Shul as him, so he felt it would be appropriate to give him the dishes for half-price. His partner, however, doesn't see it the same way. "If you give it to him for such a cheap price, your whole Shul will start coming here and demanding discounts – and we'll incur a great loss! If you really wish, you can give him a 5% discount, but that's all!"

The very next day, a man walks into the store and asks for the price of a crystal vase. "Take it for free!" exclaims the owner who was vehemently opposed to discounts just one day prior.

When his friend points out the inconsistency, he clarifies: "This fellow is our supplier; we need to show him lots of loyalty and support. Remember how busy things get around here during the Yom Tov seasons? Sometimes, we need instantaneous deliveries to restock our inventory; we need this guy to be our friend! But the Yid who sits near you in Shul – what do I need him for? Just to bring me more customers demanding generous discounts?"

The point I'm trying to make is that when Yidden go out of their way to accomplish Hashem's *ratzon* to the highest degree, it becomes very clear that we are the "suppliers" of *ruchniyus* in this world – making each and every one of us completely indispensable. When that becomes the reality, then it makes total sense for Hashem to give us some preferential treatment; after all, our existence is of paramount importance!

From here we can learn this important *yesod* of maintaining the two factors of a healthy relationship. Just as Hakadosh Baruch Hu treats us to both forms of "פניו", so too we must always take care to provide both the 'work' and the 'positive communication' aspects of our relationships. People don't realize how *nogea* this is. It's not just about *Shalom Bayis* or relationships at the office – it's also *nogea* with regard to things like a Shul. A person can provide for the Shul he *davens* at by paying membership, helping to put away *seforim*, folding tablecloths after Shabbos or any other form of assistance; but if he's the one who's constantly complaining to the *gabbo'im*, endlessly highlighting the Shul's flaws, or just *kvetching* about things in general – then he doesn't have a healthy relationship with the Shul. So let us all focus on emulating Hakadosh Baruch Hu and perfecting our relationships on both of these fronts.

וְכֹל תְּרוּמָה לְכֹל קְדָשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ לַפֶּהן לוֹ יְהִיָּה:

(במדבר ה' ט')

The Wealth that is Truly Ours to Keep

The *pasuk* says: “ וְכֹל תְּרוּמָה לְכֹל קְדָשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ לַכֹּהֵן ” – “לו יהיה” – *And any portion from any of the Kodshim that the Bnei Yisroel bring to the Kohen shall be his.* The simple translation of the *pasuk*, as clarified by many of the *meforshim*, is that the words “לו יהיה” are referring to the *Kohen*, saying that whatever *Terumos* he receives shall be his to keep. However, the Chofetz Chaim (על התורה) suggests that perhaps these words can be read as referring to the Bnei Yisroel as well. In other words: when a person gives to the *Kohen*, that money is really his – because he is the one that will receive the ultimate reward for every penny that he has given. The Chofetz Chaim applies this idea to all forms of *Tzedakah*; when a person gives, he is really getting.

I once heard a great story that depicts how a regular Yid can realistically live with this belief:

There was an extremely wealthy individual who lived in Queens. This man used to give charity frequently, but his biggest checks used to go to a certain Yeshiva that was near his home. The man built the Yeshiva from the ground up; he poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into it.

Unfortunately, the day came when his entire fortune went underground. He made a bad investment which failed really quickly, and he pulled money out of all of his resources to try and save the deal – but all to no avail. He wound up losing practically everything he had.

One night during this tough chapter in his life, the man got a knock on his door. He went to answer it, and lo and behold – it was the Rosh Yeshiva and director of the nearby Yeshiva. He was shocked that they would come collecting at a time like this; surely they had heard that he lost all his money!

The man invited them in and seated them around his table. After a short, cordial dialogue, the Rosh Yeshiva said: "We heard about the financial crisis you're going through."

The former patron nodded glumly, wondering why they had come if they were aware of his situation. "Well," the Rosh Yeshiva continued, "we made an exact cheshbon of how much money you have contributed to our institution over the years – and we would like to inform you that we are in the process of gathering the funds to return all of it to you."

For a fleeting moment, the man's facial expression displayed a mixture of shock and delight, but it quickly shifted to sorrow. "I have lost everything," he began. "My stocks, bank accounts, bonds, real estate – they're all gone. The only thing I have left is the money I put into your Yeshiva," he said in a quivering voice. "Do you want to take that away from me as well?"

Clearly, this former philanthropist recognized the true worth of the *Tzedakah* he had given. He understood that whatever he gave wasn't lost – it was just being transferred to a different bank account, the one titled "Olam Habah", and he had no interest in losing that account as well. The money we have in our physical bank accounts may be there one moment and gone the next; but the money we give is always "לו יהיה".

The Kopicznitzer Rebbe was once sitting in his home when a pauper knocked on the door. The Rebbe invited him in and offered him Tzedakah, but the man shook his head. "Rebbe, it's not money that I need!" he exclaimed. "I need a hat! I'm going door to door with nothing on my head!"

The Kopicznitzer Rebbe immediately handed the poor man his own brand new hat that he had recently purchased. "Here. Use it in good health!" The pauper left the house beaming.

When the Rebbe's family later inquired about the whereabouts of his new hat, he told them what had transpired earlier that day with the poor man. Some of his family members expressed their dissatisfaction with his decision to give away the brand new hat: "You saved up money to purchase that hat. To the pauper, it wouldn't make a difference which hat he'd have on

his head; all he needed was something to wear! Couldn't you have just given him your old one?"

The Rebbe was unperturbed. "Let me ask you all a question. In Gan Eden, which hat do you think I'm going to wear – the one I kept at home, or the one I gave away?" The Rebbe paused briefly, and then continued: "Now, why should it bother you if I wish to wear my brand new hat in Gan Eden?"

Applying this Concept to Other Areas

The truth of the matter is, the *seforim* teach us that this concept applies to other things as well. When you exert yourself and invest your energies into a specific endeavor, if the purpose is for this world – for some sort of convenience or pleasure – then it remains here, and nothing eternal becomes of it. In fact, it may very well vanish in this world as well. However, if the *kavanah* driving the exertion is *leshem Shomayim* – then it will come along with us to Olam Habah.

This is why we often see people that are totally impoverished, yet they seem so content. They may not have much material wealth, but they perceive their other bank account getting fuller and fuller each day with their triumphs in their *Avodas Hashem*. Each time they push themselves to *daven* on time, each time they choose to live with *Emunah*, each time they overcome a *nisayon* – they can feel their real wealth mushrooming, granting them a great source of satisfaction. When a person hits the snooze button on his alarm clock and gets an extra ten minutes of sleep – he doesn't own those ten minutes. They're ephemeral – gone before he can blink. But if he chooses *גבורה*, and jumps out of bed to do *Avodas HaBorei* – he owns that effort. It's his to keep forever.

The Correlation Between מתנות כהונה and Sotah

In this week's *parsha*, we find that the Torah juxtaposes the *halachos* of מתנות כהונה with the *parsha* of *Sotah*. There don't seem to be any clear relationships between the two *sugyos*; one is all about the obligations to give *Terumos* and *Ma'asros* to the *Kohanim*, while the

other discusses the laws pertaining to a woman that has strayed, *lo aleinu*. Why does the Torah place these two *parshiyos* back to back?

Rashi brings a Midrash that answers as follows: If a person chooses to avoid approaching the *Kohen* with *כהונה*, then he will wind up approaching him for a different reason – to discuss his wife who appears to be a *Sotah*. The Midrash articulates this point with an axiom: “The gate that you choose to not open for a *mitzvah*, you will wind up opening for a doctor.”

Now, here in Lakewood, the *Tzedakah* is unbelievable. There are multitudes of well-to-do *balabatim* that are forever opening their doors to *עניים ונצרכים*; it's beautiful to see. However, sometimes there are people who struggle with this *mitzvah*.

From time to time, I go around to collect money for people in need. There are many 'givers' that are easily accessible; they answer their phones and their doors without hesitation. But then there are those who are hard to get through with.

There is one individual that I tried getting through with for a while. Each time I knock on his door, there is no response. Recently, I knocked and his wife answered through the intercom: "Who is it?"

I was thrilled that she answered; I saw her husband's car in the driveway, so I figured I was finally going to get a chance to talk to him. "It's Moshe Rabinowitz; I'm here to collect money for so-and-so. Can I speak with your husband?" I asked.

"My husband is not available," came the curt response.

I figured I'd try a little harder. "When is a good time for me to come by, then?"

"Call before you come," she replied in a tone that clearly indicated the end of the conversation.

Well, I did call a few days later – but nobody answered. I left a message, but I am still waiting to hear back from them.

Of course, I can be *לכף זכות* and assume that this man is extremely busy and hardly gets a chance to listen to his voicemails. Or, perhaps he tried calling me back but he dialed the wrong number. But,

either way, there are evidently some people who make it their business to grab *mitzvos* whenever they come their way, while others don't rush in that direction with the same zeal.

Another P'shat: Developing a Relationship with the Kohen

Well, until now we were discussing Rashi's *mehalech* to explain the correlation between the *parshiyos* of מתנות כהונה and *Sotah*. However, I heard another *p'shat* from my dear *yedid*, Rav Yerachmiel Ungarischer *shlit"a*, and I think it's הפלא ופלא.

When a person is constantly giving מתנות כהונה, he develops a relationship with the *Kohen*. Each time he gives either *Terumos* or *Ma'asros* or *Reishis Hagez* – the *Kohen* becomes more familiar with him and his family. The next time the *Kohen* is in town, he knows who to stay by. When the *Kohen* needs a favor from someone in the community, he knows who to call. And a family that has a close relationship with a *Kohen* will never need to come onto him for issues like *Sotah*.

Connecting to an Adam Gadol

There's something very powerful about developing a relationship with an *Adam Gadol*; it's a connection that uplifts the entire family. I heard from Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* that the main purpose of coming to the *Kohen* after getting afflicted with *Tzara'as* is not just to get the *taharah*; it's in order to develop a relationship with the *Kohen*. Every Yid should make it his business to form connections with great people – whether it's a *Gadol*, a Rosh Yeshiva, or a Rav. It may not always be easy, because big people are usually very busy – but it's very worthwhile. He should make sure to bring his kids over to the Rav's house to ask for *brachos* or even just to watch him asking a *shailah*. He should try to get his wife to have a relationship with the Rebbetzin as well. When the family members feel like a *Gadol* is part of their family, it makes them act more refined; they feel like they too are *choshuv*.

People fool themselves by saying silly things like "The *Gedolim* are all in Eretz Yisroel" or "There aren't any great people around today

like there once were". This is foolishness. There are great people here in Lakewood as well. And even if you argue that the *Gedolim* today aren't what they once were – you still need a *kesher* with people that are far greater than you. There were always people who made this mistake, no matter what generation they were in. There were many Yidden who lived in Bnei Brak not far from the Chazon Ish, but they didn't think it was important to develop a שייכות with him. Only after he was *niftar* did they realize who they had living in their midst, and they suddenly began to bemoan the fact that they missed out on such a golden opportunity. We can't make that mistake; we have to be smart and bring our families to the homes of the *Gedolim* that live amongst us. It's something that we'll always benefit greatly from.

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