



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Naso

June 10, 2022

A Taste of Torah

Make Eye Contact

by Rabbi Yitzy Melamed

Imagine yourself, for a moment, stuck in standstill traffic on your way to work. As you sit waiting for the cars to inch forward, an unfortunate homeless beggar walks through the rows of waiting cars and looks hopefully through each window, pointing to his handwritten cardboard sign. As he approaches your car, the fact that you don't have what to offer him floats to the forefront of your mind, and you instinctively reach for your phone to check "that email you were waiting for." Or perhaps you have an imaginary conversation with your phone. Or maybe you find an intense urge to twiddle your thumbs. Anything you can think of, as long as you can find an excuse not to meet his eager gaze. With this in mind, we can resolve several difficulties encountered in this week's parsha. The *Kohanim* (priests) are commanded to bless the Jewish People with a special blessing formulated in the Torah. The final verse of the prescribed blessing states "*Yisa Hashem panav eilecha veyaseim lecha shalom* (Naso 6:26)," "May Hashem show you favor and establish peace for you." The words "*yisa Hashem panav eilecha*" literally mean "may Hashem turn His face toward you," implying a show of favor beyond what one deserves. The problem is that in the Book of Devarim, the Torah proclaims "And He does not show favor" (Devarim 10:17). Why would Hashem instruct the *Kohanim* to bless *Klal Yisrael* that they merit such favor from Him? Also, what does the end of the verse, "[May he] establish peace for you," have to do with showing His Nation favor? In truth, the Gemara asks this question in several places (Brachos 20b, Rosh Hashanah 17b, Niddah 70b) and provides an answer. We, however, will

focus on an approach offered by the Sefer Torah Temima (Rabbi Baruch haLevi Epstein; 1860-1941). This brings us back to the aforementioned escapade with the homeless beggar. Why is it so difficult to look the poor fellow in the eye? We tend to find it very hard to look anyone in the eye when we find ourselves in an uncomfortable situation with that person. This is notably common when we are very upset with someone. Conversely, however, when we are happy with someone, it is natural to look him in the eye. The Torah Temima points out that the verse can actually be read as, "May [you merit] Hashem turning to you" to face you and look you in the eye, so to speak. In other words, the *Kohanim* bless the Jewish People that they be pleasing and desirable to Hashem through their performance of His mitzvos, as opposed to upsetting Him with sins, resulting in Hashem turning toward His people and looking them in the eye. This approach, explains the Torah Temima, is supported by the fact that all three verses in the blessing refer to Hashem in the third person and the Jewish People in the second person. To return to the verse that is at the center of this discussion, it states, "May He turn His face toward you," not, "May You turn Your face toward the Jewish People." The blessing does not indicate that Hashem should do something, (i.e., show favor towards *Klal Yisrael*) but, rather, it wishes upon the Jewish People that they serve Hashem properly so that they are worthy before Him. There is thus no contradiction between the verse in our parsha and the verse in the Book of Devarim. The verse in Devarim teaches us that we shouldn't

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Stories for the Soul

Worth Crying About

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan; 1839-1933) lived in Radin, a small Polish town. Being a village with a small, observant Jewish population, the Chofetz Chaim never witnessed Shabbos desecration. During World War I, though, he, along with the other residents, was forced to flee to a larger city.

The first Shabbos he was there, the Chofetz Chaim witnessed Shabbos being desecrated. He sat and cried for a long time. The next Shabbos, he again saw a Jew desecrate the Shabbos, and he cried, this time for an even more extended period. His students asked him why he had cried on the second Shabbos so much longer than on the first Shabbos; what had affected him more the second time around?

The Chofetz Chaim explained that when he saw the Shabbos being desecrated the second time, he realized that it did not bother him as much as it had the first time. He was very distraught that he had lost his sensitivity, and this caused him to cry for an even longer time.

In this week's parsha, the section discussing a Nazirite, who abstains from, among other things, consumption of wine, follows the section dealing with a *sotah*, a woman suspected of adultery who is tested by the bitter waters. This juxtaposition is intended to teach us that one who sees a *sotah* in her disgrace will be inspired to renounce consumption of wine, due to its capacity to bring a person to inappropriate behavior.

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Kollel Happenings

SPECIAL TORAH FOR TYCOONS SEASON FINALE ON JUNE 15TH

Tune in on Zoom on Wednesday evening, June 15th at 7:30 pm for a special T4T session. Mr. Harry Rothenberg, plaintiffs personal injury attorney and partner at The Rothenberg Law Firm LLP and sought-after lecturer on Torah topics, will present the entire session on the topic of *When Systems Collide: Professional Responsibility and Opportunity vs. Religious and Moral Imperative*. For more details and Zoom info, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION LIVE & LEARN LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE WEST DENVER KOLLEL TORAH CENTER

The Live & Learn Learning Program for seniors is held Tuesdays at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Coffee and pastries at 10:30 am, two classes of 45 minutes each from 10:40-12:15 (including 5 minute break between classes), and lunch (including take-home option) at 12:15. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

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The Kollel is part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: Men must say this or else must repeat. Women are not supposed to say it but they do anyway. What part of *bentching* is this?

Answer: If a man omitted the words in the second *bracha* of *Birkas Hamazon* (colloquially referred to as *Nodeh*) that offers thanks to Hashem for *bris mila* and Torah (“*vi'al beris'cha shechasamta bivsareinu vi'al Torascha shelimadtanu*”), he has not fulfilled his obligation and must repeat the blessing (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 187:3). A woman, however, is supposed to omit these

words altogether, as women are not commanded in these mitzvos (Rema ad loc.). However, the Mishna Berura (ad loc.:9) states that women customarily recite them anyway (see Mishna Berura as to why this is acceptable).

This week's question: A person was obligated to recite both *Birkas Hamazon* and *Shemone Esrei* and did so under identical circumstances (within the appropriate halachic time frame required for each), yet he fulfills one but not the other. What circumstance causes this discrepancy?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part I

In 1932, a delegation of Jews from the Polish city of Lodz arrived in Lublin. Lodz boasted the second-largest Jewish population in Poland, behind only the city of Warsaw. Rabbi Shapiro set out several conditions upon which his acceptance was

contingent. First, he would be in Lodz for two weeks, and in the yeshiva for two weeks. Essentially, he'd be in Lodz only half the time! In addition, as part of his salary, the Jewish community of Lodz agreed to pay off the debts of the yeshiva.

A Taste of Torah

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expect Hashem to give to us beyond what we deserve, whereas the verse in our parsha blesses *Klal Yisrael* that they should actually be deserving of Hashem's favor. We also can now understand the connection between the beginning of the verse and the end of the verse, “[May He] establish peace for you.” The *Kohanim* bless *Klal Yisrael* that they be meritorious before Hashem and thereby merit Hashem establishing peace for them. This “peace” can be understood as peace between the *Klal Yisrael* and Hashem. This idea of peace between the Jewish People and Hashem is expressed by the

Seforno (Rabbi Ovadia Seforno; c. 1475-1550), who states that the beginning of the verse refers to blessing *Klal Yisrael* that they be worthy of reward in *Olam Haba* (the World to Come) and the end of the verse is a blessing that the reward not be mixed with punishment due to shortcomings, and instead be pure, as is deserving of any true servant of Hashem.

The blessing of the *Kohanim* thus takes on new meaning as we discover that it is not merely a wish for Hashem to bestow goodness upon us, but instead a blessing that we, His People, succeed in meriting His blessings in our lives.

Stories for the Soul

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Although one would think that on the contrary, one who saw the disastrous results of immoral behavior would avoid imitating it, the Torah teaches us that

even if one is repulsed by an event, it nonetheless diminishes one's sensitivity toward avoiding it, thus necessitating drastic action.

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