

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Shevuos, one of the five Biblical holidays and one of the "Shalosh Regalim" (lit: "three legs" or "times" referring to Succos, Pesach and Shevuos) is most widely known as the holiday celebrating the public revelation, when G-d appeared before the entire nation at Mt. Sinai and spoke the "Aseres Hadibros" ("Ten Statements" more commonly identified as the "Ten Commandments"). We refer to it in our holiday prayers as "zeman matan Toraseinu," the time that our Torah was given, and in the morning we read the portion in the Torah describing the public revelation.

When did this occur? The Talmud (Shabbos 86b) records a disagreement between the Rabbanan, who say that G-d gave us the Torah on the 6th day of Sivan, and Rav Yosi, who says that it was on the 7th. Shevuos itself is on the 50th day after the first day of Pesach (see Vayikra 23:15-21). Because each lunar month is (approximately) 29.5 days, the Jewish calendar alternates between having months of 30 and 29 days. Therefore, there are 30 days in Nisan and 29 days in Iyar. If we add the 15 days left in Nisan after the first day of Pesach (which is on the 15th) with the 29 days in Iyar (15+29=44), Shevuos falls out on the 6th of Sivan. Although the Torah doesn't mention that this holiday is the anniversary of the Sinai experience (hence the room for a discussion about which day it actually occurred), our calling Shevuos "zeman matan Toraseinu" indicates that we are following the opinion that the Torah was actually given on the 6th (i.e. Shevuos), not the 7th.

Similarly, the Talmud (Megillah 31a) records a discussion regarding which portion to read on Shevuos morning - about the holiday itself (Devarim 15:19-16:17) or about the public revelation (Shemos 19:1-22). Its conclusion is that since (outside of Israel) we have two days of Shevuos, we read about the revelation on the first day and the holiday(s) on the second. With the first day being the 6th, it follows that only if we are following the opinion that the revelation occurred on that day would we choose to read about it then; if the Torah was actually given on the 7th, we should read that portion on the second day of Shevuos!

Another indication that we follow the opinion that the Torah was given on the 6th is our calling the three days prior to Shevuos the "sheloshes yemai

hagballah," referring to the three days beforehand that G-d had Moshe move the nation away from Mt. Sinai (Shemos 19:12). Both Rav Yosi and the Rabbanan agree that this happened on the 3rd of Sivan (see Shabbos 78a), so according to Rav Yosi they were warned to keep back 4 days before the Torah was given, not 3. Our expression of "3 days" would seem to only be consistent with the Rabbanan.

The Mogen Avrohom (O"C 494:1) asks how we can follow the Rabbanan, if in another area of Jewish law it is apparent that we follow Rav Yosi's opinion that the Torah was given on the 7th.

After marital relations, the couple is "tamay," ritually impure, for at least a day. If he (for example) goes to the mikveh the next day, he becomes "tahor," ritually pure from that "tumah," after nightfall. However, the possibility exists that they can become "tamay" again as a result of those previous relations. The Talmud (Shabbos 86a) brings several opinions about how long afterwards this possibility exists, with the strictest saying 3 days. The Mishna (upon which this discussion takes place) takes this position, based on the nation having to separate from their spouses for 3 days before the Torah was given.

In the discussion about whether the Torah was given on the 6th or 7th day of Sivan, the Talmud says that both opinions agree that the nation was told to separate on the 4th of Sivan, when G-d told Moshe to tell them to "make yourselves holy today and tomorrow" and to "be prepared for the third day, for on the third day G-d will descend upon Mt. Sinai before the eyes of the whole nation" (Shemos 19:10-11). Therefore, according to the Rabbanan, they separated for two days (the 4th and 5th) before the Torah was given (on the 6th). According to Rav Yosi, they separated for three days (the 4th, 5th and 6th) and were given the Torah on the 7th. If this separation was to avoid the possibility of anyone being impure, and only Rav Yosi required three days of separation, since we "paskin" (conclude) that "tumah" is possible for up to three days after relations (see Y"D 196:11), we must be following the opinion of Rav Yosi! How (the Mogen Avrohom asks) can we be following Rav Yosi for this "halacha" yet act on Shevuos as if we follow the Rabbanan?

It would seem, though, that an even more basic question could be asked. When the Talmud discusses this separation at Sinai, it explains that even though G-d had said "today and tomorrow," Moshe added an extra day on his own (to which G-d agreed), causing the

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Torah to be given on the 7th rather than the 6th. If so, how can the Mishna imply that the 3 days of separation show that they can become "tamay" for three days? G-d had only asked for 2 days - it was Moshe that added the third day! If G-d's request to separate was intended to avoid this possibility of "tumah," then 2 days should suffice! Otherwise, He would have insisted on a 3-day separation in the first place! How can we learn from Moshe's having added a day that this "tumah" remains a possibility for three days?

The Talmud explains that Moshe added an extra day because if "today" meant that day (the 4th), then it would not be comparable to "tomorrow" (the 5th), as "tomorrow" includes the full day (the night before and the full day after it), while the night before the 4th had already passed without the separation. Therefore, Moshe added another full day, so that there would be two full days, the night before the 5th and the fifth plus the night before the 6th and the 6th, before the Torah was given on the 7th. The Chasam Sofer (Shabbos 87a) explains that the concept of the day beginning with the night is only true for "Benei Yisroel" (Children of Israel); for the other nations the night follows the day. Before the Torah was given, the nation hadn't yet undergone a change in status, so the night still followed the day (see Rambam, Hilchos Issuray Biya 13:1-4, that the procedures for a non-Jew to convert are based on the procedures followed at the "conversion" at Mt. Sinai). When G-d said "today and tomorrow," He meant two full days - the day of the 4th followed by its night, and the day of the 5th followed by its night - before giving the Torah on the 6th. Moshe, however, wanted the nation to follow the structure as if they had already "converted," where the day follows the night, so added an extra day.

If so, then (part of) the disagreement between the Rabbanan and Rav Yosi was whether the nation followed all the customs and details as if they had

already had a change in status or not, with Rav Yosi saying that this was what Moshe wanted - requiring an extra day - and the Rabbanan maintaining that they were still considered as non-Jews.

The concept of becoming "tamay" through marital relations only applies to "Benei Yisroel," not to non-Jews (see Rashi on Shabbos 86b d"h shel Yisroel). Therefore, only according to Rav Yosi would it be required to separate long enough to avoid this possible "tumah." And even according to him, G-d's purpose in commanding this separation wasn't to avoid this "tumah," as it was not yet applicable. (Even though there were some mitzvos that were commanded earlier, such as those at Marah, it seems less pressing to add issues of "tumah" and "tahara" before the Torah and its mitzvos were given. According to some, the "tumah" of a dead body wasn't applicable until the Mishkan was put up the following Nisan - see the Tzelach on Pesachim 90b - so not instituting other issues of "tumah" until after the Torah was given certainly makes sense.) Only after Moshe's "addition" of being treated as full-fledged "converts" was the amount of days relevant vis-À-vis this "tumah;" when G-d commanded them to separate, it was to attain a higher state of "holiness" by having them refrain from the mundane before receiving the Torah.

We can now understand how we can learn about this "tumah" from Moshe's adding a day, as now that they were being treated as full-fledged Jews, the day followed the night, and this "tumah" applied. And if after it became relevant they needed 3 days (see Avos d'Rav Noson 2:3, where Moshe's intent in adding a day was to avoid this "tumah"), then we see that for all Jews from then on this would be the time frame.

Getting back to the Mogen Avrohom's question, it's possible that we do, in fact, follow the Rabbanan's opinion that the Torah was given on the 6th, which is why we call it "zeman matan Toraseinu" (et al). However, the reason the Rabbanan didn't require 3 days of separation was not (necessarily) because this "tumah" is not possible on the 3rd day, but because it wasn't applicable before the Torah was given. Therefore, following the opinion that this "tumah" is possible for 3 days does not necessarily contradict the opinion that the Torah was given on the 6th of Sivan.

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Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Yaakov Grunewald, Pinner Synagogue

In our Sidra we find the Priestly Blessing which is certainly the most famous blessing in the world. No mitzvah so clearly illustrates the central teaching of the Torah to love our neighbours as ourselves. We see this in the blessing which the Kohanim recite before performing the Mitzvah. They say:

"who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to bless His people Israel with love." The Rabbis insisted on adding the last two words because they knew that without brotherly love, there is no blessing. Rabbi Nisan Shulman has given a beautiful explanation for the connection between this blessing and love.

Firstly, we must bear in mind that it is not the Kohanim who are blessing the people. They act as G-d's mouthpiece. Only Hashem can bless us. Indeed, all the laws governing the Priestly blessing point to this. Thus, the blessing may only be recited in Hebrew, because blessing the people in a language of their own choosing would suggest that they themselves are the authors of the blessing and that it comes from them. Secondly, the blessing may only be recited standing; because the L-d Himself is giving the blessing, and one must stand in the presence of the Almighty.

Thirdly, the Kohanim recite the blessing with their hands pointed upwards so that the everyone will know that the blessing comes only from Hashem. The question arises: If the blessing comes from G-d, why does He need the Kohanim to act as intermediaries? Let Him give the blessing directly! The answer is that the priests are a most necessary link. Hashem's special blessing can only be effective when there is absolute love amongst our people which is demonstrated when one group of Jews desires to bless other groups of Jews. That is why the Mitzvah has to be performed with love.

Why were the Priests chosen for this role? Because they are descendants of Aaron who was famous for his love of Israel. He was the lover and pursuer of peace par excellence. His love for his fellow Jews has remained the ideal for every one of us. Our Rabbis stress that he was loved in return, in just the same way.

Love leads to peace and harmony which is Judaism's greatest blessing. In this spirit, the priestly blessing ends with the sentence: "May the L-d lift up His countenance towards you and give you peace".

We wish to live in peace within ourselves. In Hebrew, peace means wholeness, the harmonious working together of all aspects of our lives. The Hebrew word Panim, countenance, is in the plural because it means not only countenance but also different aspects of our personality. We are made up of different drives, needs and desires, some of which can be contradictory. We are fragmented. The hardest thing for anyone to do is to combine all these needs, desires and passions into a harmonious whole.

In addition, we wish to live in peace with our neighbours. The Talmud tells us a story about a gathering of all the animals in nature. The lion was asked why he was the king of beasts. He replied, "Because I can roar the loudest and when I roar everyone else is silent." The thrush stood up and said, "That may be true, but if we go a mile or so from where

you are roaring, your roar is not heard. However, when I begin to chirp all the birds chirp along with me and the whole forest is filled with song."

This is the Jewish blessing of peace. Those who try to shout loudest don't achieve it. It is those who sing together and create unity who bring peace! © 2005 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

If a thief robs by violence, swears falsely and then confesses his guilt, the Torah tells us that he is liable to return the value of the object plus an additional one-fifth to the plaintiff. (Numbers 5:6,7) If, however, the plaintiff dies leaving no relatives, the money is returned to the Priest, the emissary of G-d. In the words of the Torah, "if the person has no kinsmen to whom restitution may be made for the guilt, the restitution for guilt which is made shall be the Lord's, even the Priest." (Numbers 5:8)

An obvious question emerges: Is it possible that the plaintiff does not have any relatives?! In the words of the great Rashi, "is there anyone in Israel who has no next of kin...or distant relation going back to Yaakov (Jacob)? " Rashi concludes that the text, therefore, must refer to a ger, a proselyte, who has died leaving no next of kin among the Jewish people. If the ger passes away, the law is that the money must be restored to the kohen.

In order to understand this idea, the special relationship between G-d and the proselyte must be examined. Nechama Leibowitz points out the following Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 8:2), "Proselytes are what they are, not by virtue of a family title, but simply through their own free will they have come to love G-d. He [G-d] therefore, responds by loving them, as it is written 'the Lord loves the righteous.'" (Psalms 146:8) For the Midrash, the righteous are converts for whom G-d feels a special love. Having accepted G-d through their own volition, G-d, in return, feels a unique love for them.

Hence, in our text, theft against a ger results in payment to G-d, as G-d is the closest kin of the convert. The money is then given to the kohen, G-d's emissary.

It is often the case in our community that the convert is mistreated and not embraced equally in the fold. Here the Torah is teaching that the ger, far from being cast aside, is the most important. Being especially loved by G-d, we in that same spirit should have special love for them.

No wonder this law is always read close to the holiday of Shavuot. Shavuot celebrates G-d's giving of the Torah. The law of *gezel ha-ger* (stealing from a proselyte) reminds us that the Torah was given to all Jews-including converts.

Shavuot also features the reading of Megillat Ruth, the Scroll of Ruth. Ruth is the convert par excellence. Not coincidentally, from her the Messiah will one day come, teaching once again that while we may be holy, the convert is the holy of holies. © 2005 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

What is the real significance of the Festival of Shavuot, the only Festival of the bible without a name which truly defines its essence?! Unlike Pesach, which refers to the Pascal lamb sacrifice which was the defining moment of Israelite commitment to the G-d of Abraham in defiance of the G-ds of Egypt, thereby making them worthy of, and setting the stage for, their exodus from Egyptian slavery, and Sukkot which refers to the booths in which the Israelites dwelt during their miraculous sojourn in the desert, Shavuot connotes the weeks leading up to a specific day rather than to the day itself! Is it not mandatory for us to attempt to truly understand the message of this second-and major-"pilgrim" festivals (the second of our shalosh regalim)

Fascinatingly enough, both the precise date as well as the true meaning of this "mystery" Festival of Shavuot is dependant upon a famous historical controversy which raged between the Pharisees and Saducees, two ideological "parties" which vied for ascendancy during the Mishnaic period (c.200 BCE - 200 CE). The Saducees, who traced their origins to the well-known priestly clan of Zadok and were committed to the plain meaning of the Bible without the inclusion of the Oral Traditions, maintained that the Biblical command to count seven weeks (Sefirah), "You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Sabbath" (Lev. 3:15), refers to the first Sunday after the onset of Passover, from when you must continue to count seven complete weeks (from Sunday to Sunday), at the conclusion of which "you shall make the Festival of Shavuot (Deut.16:10)".

These seven weeks fall out during the first harvest period in Israel, beginning with the harvest of the barley (which is the initial omer sacrifice to be brought on that Saturday night) and culminating in the wheat harvest which is expressed by the two loaves of wheat which is the central vegetation Temple sacrifice and "first-fruits" gift of Shavuot.

The Pharisees, who are the forerunners of the Talmudic Sages and who endowed "last-word" authority to the Oral Tradition of Biblical interpretation (Hebrew perush), insisted that the Biblical phrase "the morrow of the Sabbath" refers to the day following the first day of the Passover Festival (taking the Hebrew Shabbat to be identified in this context with Shabbaton, which is Biblically used for Festival elsewhere in that very same Biblical passage of Lev. 23). It is apparent that the date

for the Shavuot Festival would differ, depending upon which ideological position determined from when you begin your count!

So divisive did this difference of opinion prove itself to be-after all, the unity of the Jewish people is clearly dependent upon the commonality of the Hebrew calendar-that the day in which this controversy was settled (obviously in accordance with the Pharisees, which is our current practice) was declared to be a semi-Festival upon which one should neither fast nor recite a eulogy (B.T. Taanit 17b, Menahot 65a, based on Megillat Taanit).

What was the real significance of their debate? I heard from my revered teacher Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik the following interpretation. According to the Saducees, the Festival of Shavuot is completely separate and apart from the Festival of Passover, relating not at all to the exodus from Egypt but only to the agricultural reality of the Land of Israel; hence a unit of seven complete weeks-from Sunday to Sunday, beginning the first Sunday from the onset of Passover only because Passover also happens to fall out in the harvesting season-spans the barley to wheat harvest, which is to be seen as a separate period of thanksgiving to G-d, for an agricultural rather than an historical reason. From this perspective, Shavuot is a separate agricultural Festival specifically celebrating the climax of the period with the wheat harvest, but logically incorporating within its name the entire 7-week period of harvest, from barley to wheat.

The Pharisees have a totally different interpretation. The very fact that the Oral Tradition insists that the sefirah count begin on the night following the first day of Passover-even if it falls out in the middle of the week (as it usually does) -- links the seven week count inextricably to the Festival of Passover, with the Biblical "until the day following the seventh week you shall count, fifty days" coming out 50 days from the onset of Passover! This indissoluble bond between Passover and Shavuot is not all necessarily true according to the Saducees.

For the Pharisees, Shavuot contains an historical as well as an agricultural significance; the Oral Law defines Shavuot as the time in which we received the Torah from Mount Sinai. Indeed, from the perspective of the Pharisees, Passover is an incomplete Festival, awaiting its completion in the Festival of Shavuot. Passover is merely our freedom from physical bondage, awaiting our freedom from spiritual bondage (the internal blandishments of temptations and addictions) which only comes with the giving of the Torah on Shavuot;

Passover is "freedom from" (herut), which, unchannelled, can lead to wild recklessness and licentiousness, awaiting the mission of Torah which will provide us with "freedom for" (aharayut). On Passover we only get as far as the desert, an alien, hostile and undeveloped expanse, awaiting our entrance into Israel

and construction of our Holy Temple which the Bible identifies with Shavuot, the Festival of the First Fruits Temple sacrifice; Passover is the first step, our Festival of Fate when G-d forced us out of Egypt with His "outstretched arm and strong hand," whereas Shavuot is our Festival of Destiny, when-by our truly choosing to follow the dictates of Torah- we will lead the world to peace and redemption from the backdrop of Israel and Jerusalem (Isaiah 2, Micah 4).

Hence, Shavuot is named by the Pharisaic Sages of the Talmud Atzeret, which means "conclusion", with the days of the omer count serving as a connective "holo shel moed" between the beginning of our freedom on Passover and freedom's culmination in redemption on Shavuot. The progression from the one to the other demands rigorous introspection and repentance, commitment to our Torah and its ideals for world repair; the days of the Sefirah must be days of perseverance, preparation, penitence and purification. After all, did not the sanctity of G-d's heavenly throne appear to the elders of Israel at the Sinai Revelation as "white-blue sapphire," and are not the mystical sefirot the emanations of the Divine with which we must sanctify ourselves and our world?

Therefore the culminating Festival of this period is known by the days of preparation, Shavuot; it itself does not yet have a name because we have not yet reached the level of complete redemption. And we read the Book of Ruth, the last chapter of which takes place between the barley and wheat harvest, and which tells of a Moabite woman inspired by the loving Torah of the land of Israel and from whose womb will eventually come the king-redeemer-but only when we become truly worthy! © 2005 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The Torah describes the contributions brought by the leaders of the tribes at length in Chapter 7, repeating the details twelve times in all. The simplest reason for this repetitive detail is in order not to insult any of the leaders. "The correct reason for what is written is that the Almighty honors His creatures... He wanted to mention them by name together with the details of their contribution, and to note on which day each one brought his sacrifices." [Ramban]. At the end of the passage, the Torah gives a summary of all the contributions. "Twelve silver bowls, twelve silver basins, twelve golden spoons..." [Bamidbar 7:84]. This is no longer an attempt to honor every individual, and we may well ask why this summary is necessary. Can we not add the totals of the contributions ourselves?

Evidently the purpose of the Torah is to emphasize the proper balance between the individual lists and the overall contribution. As the Ramban notes,

even though the contributions were identical it can be assumed that every leader had his own interpretation of the contribution. "Every Nassi decided on his own to give a contribution to the dedication of the Tabernacle, and each one decided on the same amounts. But Nachshon had one reason for the contribution, while every other leader had his own different reason." Thus, the Torah teaches us an important principle in the need to balance between the individual and the community. From an external point of view, Bnei Yisrael act as a community, and exaggerated individualism can be a fault. However, from the internal point of view, every individual has an opportunity to express his own personality and his own ideas.

This can explain some differences between the individual lists of the contributions and the summary. Among other things, every Nassi brought "one silver bowl weighing one hundred and thirty measures, one silver basin of seventy Shekels, in holy Shekels." But in the summary, it is written, "One hundred and thirty in silver for each bowl and seventy for each basin, all the silver of the utensils was two thousand and four hundred in holy Shekels" [7:85]. The total weight of the silver utensils is the result of adding 130 of the bowl to 70 of the basin, a total of 200 for each Nassi. Why was this sum not given in the description for each individual?

Evidently, it would not have been proper to add the bowls and the basins in the individual contributions, since every leader had a special thought in mind for every element of his contribution. (For example, Rashi notes that the bowls represented Adam, and their weight of 130 was Adam's age when his first child was born, while the basins symbolized Noach, and the weight of 70 represented the 70 nations that descended from him.)

Thus, in the individual contributions, it was not right to combine the bowls and the basins. On the other hand, it was proper to do this with respect to the combined contribution. In this summary, the Torah ignored the individual meaning that every Nassi gave to the contribution and referred to the common property, that they were made of silver. In this case, there was no problem in combining the two items and to give the total sum of silver.

"We Give Thanks to You"

by Prof. Shalom Rozenberg

In one of his wonderful insights, Rabbi Nachman of Breslev taught us that someplace in the world there is a man who is troubled by a great question, while at the other end of the world another man is troubled by a different question. And neither one realizes that his question contains the answer to that of the other one. This claim has always fascinated me, in spite of the implication that it will never be possible to find a specific example of the phenomenon before the arrival of Eliyahu the Prophet. However, it now seems to

me that this past year I have managed to find a preliminary example of this effect.

For a long time, I have been bothered by a question about the mitzva of reciting the Hallel. In our daily prayers, there are two blessings related to giving praise to G-d, at the beginning and the end of "Pesukei D'Zimra," praises taken mostly from Tehillim. In "Baruch She'amar," we say, "G-d, the father, who is merciful, praised by His nation, glorified and magnificent in the words of His righteous people and His servants: With the songs of your servant David we will praise you, our G-d, we will make you great, praise you, and glorify you, we will mention your name and we will crown you as our king, our G-d..." In "Yishtabach," we say, "G-d, King, great and praised with songs, the G-d of thanks." These prayers do not involve the mitzva of reciting Hallel but are related to another obligation: "It is required of all creatures... to thank, praise, glorify, rise up, give praise, bless, and to praise." ["Nishmat"]. We feel that we have a moral obligation to give thanks to the source of the good life that we enjoy. This moral obligation takes precedence over the acceptance of the yoke of the mitzvot. The nation of Yisrael fulfills this obligation by singing praises to G-d, who has been forgotten not only by the many generations that worshipped idols but even by the monotheistic religions, which in spite of their belief in G-d so often worship other deities or themselves. And it is true that we are very good at fulfilling the moral obligation of giving thanks to G-d. On the other hand, how can we understand the Divine command to praise G-d? How does this correspond to the Divine trait of "modesty"? Does G-d need this praise?

That is my first question. I began to feel the second question more strongly than before this year, when I recited the Hallel on Yom Haatzmaut and on Yom Yerushalayim. Why does the Chareidi sector object to reciting Hallel? Why have some true believers begun to doubt whether they should say Hallel in difficult historical moments when they feel the nation has strayed from the correct path? From within my sad feeling, I began to understand that this very question helps to answer the first question above.

Hallel should not be recited for every phenomenon! It is true that we are obligated to recite a blessing upon hearing bad news, just as we must recite a blessing about good news. But a blessing is not a song of praise, Hallel. In order to explain this difference, I will need to make use of one of the principles of the Kabbalistic-historic approach of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato-the RAMCHAL. As far as I understand his approach, human history can be viewed as a dramatic play. Just as in a play on a stage, the drama of life may fool us in the first acts. In a play of suspense, for example, we may begin to suspect an innocent man as a murderer, until the climax, when the picture changes suddenly. The play should show us our errors, such that the clues that at first seemed to point towards the

innocent person must now be seen to point in the opposite way, towards the one who is really guilty. The same is true of the ultimate dramatic play, human history. When we look around us, it seems that the world is ruled by independent forces which do not surrender to Divine authority. The forces of nature are evidently indifferent, while the forces in history act in a way that is completely and totally the opposite of true morality. And religions, philosophies, and ideologies regularly come on the scene, creating the impression that they provide real truth. Often these illusions are backed up by the power of the sword. These illusions and lies must disappear. At some point in the drama of life their full lack of substance must be revealed, and they must self-destruct. The collapse of the Communist monster was a wonderful example of how this should and must happen.

In general, the illusions still control the world, but we must maintain our belief that the entire play is managed by the Almighty. It is wrong to say that there are two directors of the play. "Anybody who says 'modim modim' should be silenced" [Berachot 33b]. The Almighty is the one and only director of the play. We take this into account by reciting blessings for the good and also for what is perceived as bad. We join in perceiving the illusions, but sometimes the truth that lies behind them is revealed within the play. These are milestones along the path leading to the climax of the play, to the shattering of the illusions, to redemption.

And that is why we must recite the Hallel. The command to say Hallel is a stamp of approval, showing that what we see is a revelation of a hidden hand, a flash of the light of truth shining into the world of darkness. In effect, the command is really a way to grant us permission! We are now allowed to recite the Hallel. And this explains why there is a controversy. We believe that the establishment of the State of Israel and the Six Day War were flashes of this type of light, events which partially lit up the darkness which usually masks the actions of the director. When darkness is removed, the director is revealed. When this happens, we are permitted to recite the Hallel; in fact, we are then commanded to recite it. "Sing out, barren woman who has not given birth, burst out in song and be happy" [Yeshayahu 54:1]. This woman must recite the Hallel even if her son is ill, and she is still waiting for medicine. For this permission and this command, we say the prayer attributed to Rav: "We thank you, our G-d, for the fact that we can thank you" [Sotta 40a]. Thank you for giving us permission, by commanding us, to give thanks to you.

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

Torah Web

“**M**ay Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance toward you and endow you with grace. May Hashem

lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you." The blessing of the kohanim is called a bracha meshuleshes, a three part bracha. In reality there are six brachos. Why is it called meshuleshes and what is the logical progression of the three brachos?

The opening bracha provides for monetary success and protection from mazikin (Sifrei). These are not two separate brachos. Rather, the second half is a protection from the potential perils of the first half.

You increase silver and gold for yourselves and everything that you have will increase. And your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem (Devarim 8:13-14). This scenario describes the ruination of numerous individuals and communities in the history of Am Yisroel.

In our own time we have witnessed many decent, observant persons and/or families whose lives and/or marriages have been ruined by the temptations and trappings of great wealth. Torah observance and moral uprightness, which governed happy, wholesome homes of modest means, are too often discarded by the adoption of a lifestyle made possible by, and associated with, extraordinary financial success. These are indeed riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune (Koheles 5:12).

These are the mazikin, the damaging side-effects of monetary blessing, which "v'yishmerecha" guards against. Hence, it is not a separate blessing, but rather a preserving of and protection from the potential perils of "yivorechecha."

The second bracha is the blessing of Torah. May he give you the light of Torah (Bamidbar Raba 11:13). As we say in "sim shalom": for with the light of Your countenance You gave is the Torah of life. The blessing of Torah and of spiritual greatness is critical to the very essence of a Jew. Yet even this bracha requires protection.

"And you shall love Hashem your G-d, that the name of Hashem become beloved through you. One should read, learn, and serve Torah scholars, and his dealings with people should be in a pleasant manner. What do people say about him? Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah. Fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah. Woe unto people who do not learn Torah. The person who learned Torah, see how pleasant are his ways, how refined are his deeds.

"But one who reads, learns, and serves Torah scholars, and his business transactions are not conducted faithfully, and whose manner of speaking with people is not pleasant, what do people say about him? Woe unto that person who learned Torah. Woe unto his father who taught him Torah. Woe unto his teacher who taught him Torah. This person who learned Torah, see how perverse are his deeds, and how ugly are his ways (Yoma 86a). This is the terrible sin of chilul Hashem (Rashi)."

One who is blessed with the privilege to learn Torah can cause a great kiddush Hashem or the

opposite. An ignorant Jew who is dishonest or impolite causes a small chilul Hashem. A talmid chacham who is dishonest or impolite causes a much greater chilul Hashem. In that case, his very learning is not a blessing but a curse. Therefore, after the kohein gives the bracha of Torah, he hastens to add "viychunecha", may He endow you with grace, namely in the eyes of people.

Popularity is not necessarily good. But in this context, it allows the bracha of Torah to cause kiddush Hashem. Hence, it is not a separate blessing, but rather an extension of, and a protection from the potentially disastrous chilul Hashem consequence of the bracha of Torah.

The angels said before Hashem, it is written about You, "Who does not show favor-lo yisa panim" (Devarim 10:17), then how do you show favor to Israel ("yisa Hashem panav ailecha")? Hashem answered, and shall I not show favor to Israel? For I require birchas hamazon only if they eat and are satiated. Yet they are stringent and say birchas hamazon even for a kezayis (Berachos 20b).

This stringency is different than other rabbinic enactments. It refers to one who is so poor that he only has one kezayis to eat (Tanchuma Naso 10). Yet he favors Hashem. Not only does he not complain, but he even recites birkas hamazon. Since he favors Hashem, Hashem, favors him in return (Rav Eliyahu Gutmacher 20b).

Thus, the last of the three brachos blesses a poor person who is meticulously observant. Presumably the bracha is wealth to go along with Torah. This is the progression of the three blessings: wealth, Torah, and a combination of both.

Yet even this great bracha of material and spiritual wealth can have a downside. A rich man enjoys wealth, and a scholar enjoys Torah. One who has both blessings is often beset with inner conflict. Should he focus on learning or on financial matters? Sometimes this conflict precludes appreciation and enjoyment of either of the brachos. Therefore the kohein adds "may He establish peace for you". This does not mean a peace with other nations or other Jews. Rather, it means an inner peace which enables a recipient of spiritual and physical blessings to enjoy both. Hence it is not a separate bracha, but a protection against the conflict which can arise from the combination which is the first half of this bracha.

In sum, there are only three brachos in ascending order, and each can turn into a curse. The second part of each of the three brachos is meant to guard against the potential negatives of the first half. It is not a separate bracha but a means to preserve the blessing of the preceding phrase.

The words of birchas kohanim are part of our daily communal tefila. Let us internalize the critical lessons of these blessings so that we be worthy of receiving them. © 2005 Rabbi M. Willig & TorahWeb.org

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

Rav Frand

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Parshas Naso is the longest parsha in the Torah, containing 176 verses. (It is interesting to note that the longest tractate in Talmud-Bava Basra-also has 176 blatt (folios, two-sided pages), and the longest chapter in Tanach, the Bible-Tehillim (Psalms) 119 -- also has 176 verses.) When I was a young child, I remember feeling bad for the Bar Mitzvah boy who had to read Parshas Naso. The truth of the matter is that in terms of being a Ba'al Koreh [(Public) Torah reader], Parshas Naso is a rather simple parsha, because a large part of it is basically repetition.

The end of the Parsha contains the recitation of the various sacrifices offered by the Princes of each of the Tribes on consecutive days in honor of the dedication of the Mishkan. The Torah tells us the exact offering of every single Prince. However, as it turns out, every Prince brought exactly the same offering. For 12 Princes (Nesiim), one after the other, the Torah tells us verbatim the same thing. So the Bar Mitzvah boy doesn't have to learn so many new pesukim, after all.

There is a fascinating Medrash on this portion of the Nesiim. The Medrash relates that the Nasi from Yehudah, which was the first tribe to make an offering, had it easy. He could offer whatever he desired. The second Nasi-Nesanel ben Tzuar of the Tribe of Yissachar-was faced with a dilemma: what was he going to bring?

We can compare this dilemma to the following situation: There will be 12 Bar Mitzvahs in shul, one week after the other. The first Bar Mitzvah serves a fruit cup, a quarter of a chicken, a piece of kugle, some carrots, and some chocolate cake for desert. That is Bar Mitzvah-Week 1.

The next week is Bar Mitzvah, Week 2. What does he serve?

"I should serve the same chicken, the same kugle? That makes no sense! I'm not an imitator. That is not me. I'll do it differently. I'll serve chicken cutlets and broccoli..." The person will plan how to make each course a little different, a little better.

The poor third guy has already seen the chicken and the chicken cutlets. What can he do? He obviously must serve beef!

We can readily understand that by the time we get to Bar Mitzvah number 12, he really needs to outdo himself...

The Medrash says that this is what went through the mind of Nesanel ben Tzuar: If I try to do different than the Tribe of Yehudah, if I try to 'one-up' Nachshon ben Aminadav, then the Nasi after me and the Nasi after him will face a spiral of escalating

sacrifices, escalating costs, until day 12. Imagine what the Nasi will have to bring by then!

Nesanel ben Tzuar reasoned as follows: We know our own nature. Everyone will argue that his offering was better. This will lead to Lashon Hara and hatred and jealousy. We know our nature.

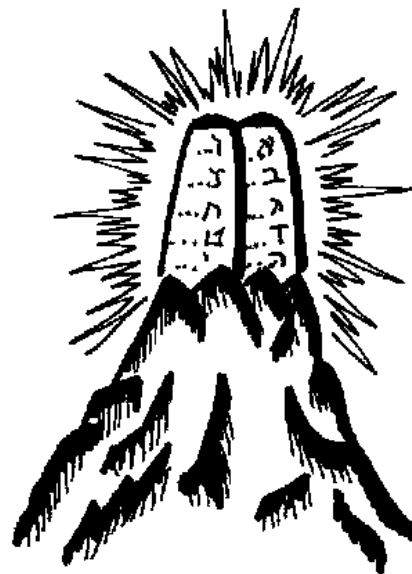
So, Nesanel ben Tzuar did a tremendous thing. He brought exactly the same offering. He set the tone-everyone is the same.

What was G-d's response? The Medrash says an unbelievable thing...

There is an inviolate rule that a Public Offering can override Shabbos prohibitions, but a Private Offering cannot. No individual offering is ever brought on the Sabbath. If that is true, the sequence of offerings of the Princes should have been suspended on Shabbos, since they were Private Offerings. In this case, however, G-d allowed the offering to be brought even on Shabbos because it was like a Public Offering.

Since all of the offerings were brought exactly like one another to maintain the sense of community (Tzibur), peace, and unity-this was a Korban Yachid (Private Offering) that was infused with the spirit of a Korban Tzibur (Public Offering). It was a Korban Yachid that was brought to keep the Tzibur intact. G-d said-as it were-"For Me, this is considered a Communal Offering".

There is a great ethical lesson here. This teaches us the importance of communal unity and the importance of communal peace. We see what G-d's response is to one who does things to promote such peace, unity, and harmony. A person that keeps a Tzibur together is one who brings merit to the masses in a most distinguished fashion and who merits many wonderful things for himself as well. © 2005 Rabbi Y. Frand and torah.org



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