

מעייין הקדושה שבתוך כלל ישראל הרב חיים קסמן

The Torah places the *parsha* of *Birchas Kohanim* immediately after the *parsha* of *Nazir*. The *meforshim* seek to explain the message of this juxtaposition. Perhaps we can understand this based on the broader context of the entire *parsha*. *Chazal* tell us *Nazir* is an outgrowth of the *parsha* of *Sotah*. Prior to the *parsha* of *Sotah* we find the *parsha* of *gezel haGer* in which the repentant thief, lacking an address to pay back his debt, gives the money to the Kohen. The bookends of *Sotah-Nazir* are on one side the Kohen taking and on the other side the Kohen giving. Of course, the deeper truth is that the Kohen accepting this payment from the thief is really a form of giving. His willingness to take this gift enables the thief to finalize his *teshuva*. Kohanim serve the greater *tzibbur* in many ways. In one of them, accepting the gifts of the people, they serve the role of being a vehicle for the *tzibbur* to accomplish acts which bring them closer to Hashem.

This provides a solution for us as well. When we find ourselves with a problem that has no avenue of solution we can take that energy and give with it. When one gives to those who serve the *tzibbur* one also gives to the *tzibbur*. Their taking from the *tzibbur* strengthens the entire body of Klal Yisroel.

In Parshas Shemini, Aharon HaKohen raises his hands and blesses Bnai Yisroel (ויקרא ט, כב). *Chazal* explain that because he lifted his hands, Aharon merited the *Birchas Kohanim*. The *Sefas Emes* explains, as a result of raising his hands – representing his total devotion of all his *kochos* to Klal Yisroel, he became the vehicle of blessing. To the degree that the Kohen devotes himself to the service of Bnai Yisroel he is a vehicle through which Divine Blessing flows. Part of this devotion to the *tzibbur* is taking from them, thus allowing them a share in this flow of *beracha* and effort on their behalf.

Sefas Emes explains the connection between *Nazir* and *Birchas Kohanim* in the following way. The *Nazir* adapts the lifestyle of quasi-Kohen, separating from wine and proximity to the dead. This reveals that within Klal Yisroel lies a reservoir of spiritual energy from which all the various levels of spiritual accomplishment stem. As *Chazal darshen* (חז"ל נז): we are a city that contains all royalty- Kohanim, Nevi'im, and Melachim.

The ability to live an elevated life, whether institutionalized in the *Kehuna* or as an individual such as the *Nazir* or the *Navi*, comes from Klal Yisroel. As such, those living at a higher level must understand that they need to give back. Aharon HaKohen understood this and gave all his strength to bless Bnai Yisroel. This became *Birchas Kohanim*. We want the *Nazir* to understand this as well. The *Nazir* instructs the Kohen as to where his *ma'alah* emerges from and the Kohen teaches the *Nazir* what to do with this *ma'alah*.

This really speaks to a deeper conflict within ourselves. The Rambam learns the *mitzvah* of *Viduy* in *teshuva* from the *parsha* of *gezel haGer*. *Sefas Emes* explains this by pinpointing the most fundamental sin- theft. When we delude ourselves into having our own agenda and aren't cognizant of the fact that we are players on Hashem's stage, carrying out His agenda, we are essentially stealing. This departure from living with an awareness of Hashem's plan is the source for all sin. Thus, the confession of the thief is the frame for the confession of all repenters.

This sin of *gezel* is very subtle. Getting annoyed when things don't go our way; frustration when our children misbehave; "if only people would do things my way" all exemplify this.

Chazal say Yaakov Avinu returned to retrieve *pachim ketanim* because to the Tzaddik, possessions are dearer to him than his life. The reason, *Chazal* explain, is because they don't allow

themselves to touch stolen goods. *Chazal* aren't referring to a crass act of theft, but to this subtle awareness of whose agenda we are living. All that is given to us is a gift from Hashem and is therefore precious. The *Tzaddik* fully appreciates this.

The Moon said to Hashem, "Two kings cannot rule with one crown." Hashem replied, "Minimize yourself." That is this struggle. If we don't realize in whose world we operate there are two kings, which is impossible. Hashem's solution is for us to minimize ourselves with the goal to understand there is only one crown and it belongs to Hashem and we are serving Him.

The *gemara*: ברכות כ speaks of the contradiction as to whether Hashem shows us favoritism. Hashem answers, "I told them to say *birchas haMazon* when they are replete and they took upon themselves to thank me for a *k'zayis* or *k'beitza*- how could I not favor them?" Again, these two sides. Thanking Hashem when we are replete or acknowledging His hand in every *k'zayis* that comes our way is turning taking into giving. The Kohen is taking only if it is his own agenda, but if he is a servant in the Kingdom of Hashem, he is giving by the act of taking.

The seeming contradiction of the role of Kohen- is he taking or giving, lies at the heart of the mistake of the Sotah. She saw the world as a place to take. The Nazir, sensing the root of this problem in himself, separates from wine. We drive the point home with *Birchas Kohanim*- understand your *ma'alah* and from whence it derives. You are drawing from the spiritual energy of Klal Yisroel to live an elevated life. Just as the Kohen, understanding this, serves the *tzibbur* in giving and taking and both are in actuality acts of giving, so too should the Nazir understand his role, responsibility and his place in Hashem's world – a servant of Hashem.

We should be *zoche* to reach this level of *Medakdek Al Atzmeinu* and *Mima'eit Atzmeinu*, recognizing the truth that there is little we are in control of and the reality that we are all part of Hashem's plan.