

PARSHAS NASO

תש"פ

Naso is an interesting parsha – it is a continuation of Parshas Bamidbor. Klal Yisroel are now structured as a military camp. This structure, and the number of men over 20, was necessary for maintaining the presence of the Shechinoh in their midst. This number was established earlier when Klal Yisroel were counted for donating the adonim. They are Hashem's army on the way to Eretz Yisroel. They are fighting His wars, acting as His emissaries and this is how the land would be conquered. Hashem dwells in the midst of the Jewish military camp and He fights our battles. This is why the machaneh needs to be kodosh.

In the middle of this camp, we have the mishkon. It is the center – the magnet for the presence of the Shechinoh. The Bnei Levi are not part of the regular army. They are charged with carrying the mishkon. Each of the three families of Shevet Levi have their own job in transporting the mishkon. Here the parsha stops. Parshas Naso continues with describing the various jobs given to the families of Gershon, Kehos, and Merari. Kehos' job is special because they carry the keilim – the aron – on their shoulders. They do not use wagons to carry the mishkon's materials like the other two families.

This topic is concluded and a new topic is started – sending out of the machaneh the people who are tomei. But in truth, it is not a new topic. It continues the theme of maintaining the kedushoh of the machaneh – removing both tumas hanefesh described in Parshas Ki Setzei – having total distance from arayos – and tumas haguf. One who is tomei cannot enter the Beis Hamikdosh and cannot eat kodshim. Bilaam told Balak that Hashem is repulsed by arayos, and any connection with Hashem will be disrupted if arayos are present where Jews live.

But here in this parsha, we talk about the tzaruoh – the most extreme of the tumas haguf who is sent from all three machanos. Why is the person so removed from Hashem's camp? What is the source of this tumas haguf? It is the aveiroh of loshon horo. The remedy is to put this person in total social isolation. He causes machlokes and discord in society and he must be removed from society. Having this tumas haguf is a result of bad middos and it must be treated very severely. He must sit all by himself in isolation. Hashem cannot maintain His Shechinoh with such a person in the camp. It doesn't matter if it is a man or woman.

Just imagine what this looked like while Klal Yisroel traveled through the midbor and someone developed tzoraas. You have a magnificent formation of groups of Klal Yisroel flanking the mishkon on all sides with Shevet Levi in the middle, and then you see some pathetic individuals who are booted from the entire formation straggling from behind – outside the annanei hakovod. When we read the Chumash, we have to pause and reflect about what is really happening in order to hear the message. The message is very powerful – Hashem cannot tolerate a baal loshon horo – a baal machlokes in His midst.

The next parsha seems unconnected. But again, there is a reason why it was put here. We send people out of the machaneh for loshon horo. Now we talk about the korbon of shevuas hapikodon. This is a korbon which is brought for denying money you owe by taking a shevuoh with Hashem's name. It is the only korbon brought for a meizid. The severity of this is that one used Hashem's Name to steal money. The possuk says that the guilty person denied Hashem and stole money. The Tosefta says that one never steals money unless he denies Hashem first. Whenever you steal, you are simultaneously denying Hashem. Why?

People often have a very twisted relationship with money. True, money is necessary for our existence, but it is only a tool to be used for our higher ends and not an end in itself. There are more important things in life than money. When money becomes a goal in itself, it corrupts us and destroys all our relationships. We know that parnosoh is in the hands of Hashem. Moshe and Aharon were commanded to preserve a container of mon from the midbor to bear witness for all future generations that parnosoh comes from Hashem and not from our efforts.

If a person steals, he is essentially denying all this. He is declaring that Hashem is not involved in my financial success – it is all in my hands. Chazal see this as a denial of Hashem. This is the only way a person is capable of stealing. But then the person compounds the problem by taking a shevuoh in order to steal. He is taking the emes of Hashem and making it comparable to the false statement he is making. It is a total kefiroh in what the emes of Hashem stands for. It requires a special kapporah. This is the only korbon given for a meizid – in addition to giving back the money to where it belongs – or his heirs.

But what if the one who was stolen from is a ger and has no heirs? Just imagine – a ger is someone who has a special chiyuv to be loved and supported, and this person goes ahead and lies and uses Hashem's name to steal from him. Now he wants to do teshuvoh, but he can't give it back – there are no heirs to give it back to. He can't keep it – it's not hefker. He must give the money he stole to the Kohen. He must give it to the people who will not use physical power to succeed in this world. They have declared that their entire financial success is directly dependent on Hashem. The person who uses Hashem to steal drives the Shechinoh from the Machaneh from Hashem. The Shechinoh cannot coexist with this.

But not only this goes to the Kohen, other things also. Here we are told bikkurim go to the Kohen. Why are bikkurim mentioned here?

Just imagine – a person has a vineyard which he toils and sweats over to finally produce the first cluster of grapes. He might easily feel that he accomplished so much! He should enjoy all the fruits of his labor! But no – he has to bring those very first fruits to the Beis Hamikdosh and give them to the Kohen. He goes through the entire Jewish history – from Hashem saving Yaakov from Lovon's swindling all the way up to when Hashem brings Klal Yisroel out of Egypt and settles them in Eretz Yisroel. He declares: This is how I got these grapes today. It is not my achievement, it is not my land, it is not my effort. Hashem gave me everything and it all belongs to Him – so I give it to the Kohen who represents Hashem. Rashi here points out an interesting aspect of terumos and maasros. The kohen and levi cannot demand to be sustained by Klal Yisroel. Shevet Levi are relying only on Hashem to provide for them. The Yisroel can choose to whom he wants to give it.

We are describing a military camp of Hashem. This means He can't coexist with various types of tumas haguf and tumas hanefesh like arayos. This brings us to the parsha of Sotah. We can ask a question: why do we need this whole unusual, humiliating process to determine if she was unfaithful? Normally in halacha we require two witnesses to change someone's status or to establish if an aveiroh was done. Without two witnesses, we don't know that any aveiroh was done. That should be the end of it. Even if there are witnesses of yichud which may be an issur de'oraisoh, it shouldn't establish her guilt and she is not forbidden to her husband.

Hashem despises znus. If there's even a suspicion of znus, it must be resolved and clarified before the couple can continue living together. Hashem will not tolerate this couple together in the camp if there is a question of infidelity between them. The Torah requires that we set up gedolim against arayos. We learned in Parshas Emor from Shlomis bas Divri that if a married woman is too friendly with other men, it is a breakdown in gidrei tznius. We need to put up gedolim. When a husband notices that his wife is being too friendly with another man and warns her not to seclude herself with him, he is setting up a proper geder against arayos. If she was careless and violates that geder and creates suspicion and violates the issur of yichud, the Torah says she becomes forbidden to her husband and has to go through the most humiliating process until her status is clarified. Why? What did she do? She belittled the walls that the Torah put up against znus. Hashem despises anything close to znus. Someone who violates these gedolim is ruining the hashroas haShechinoh. Even if she will be cleared at the end of the process, the fact that she took this area lightly and made herself suspect is reason enough to be put through a whole humiliating procedure.

The next parsha of Nozir tells us something amazing. Chazal explain the connection. Anyone who got exposed to the fact that a Jewish woman was suspected of znus to the point where she became a Sotah is put in spiritual danger. He has to go to the other extreme to remove this influence and get his sensitivity back – no grooming hair, no wine.

Just imagine: A person innocently wants to bring a korban and goes to the mishkon or beis hamikdash and without even realizing it, stumbles upon a Sotah procedure. He sees her humiliation and punishment for suspected infidelity. This weakens his repulsion to arayos – even though he sees what happens to someone who wasn't careful in this area – and he has to forbid himself from wine to restore his sensitivity and uproot this influence. It is all connected to the theme of keeping the machaneh kodosh.

The parsha concludes with birkas kohanim and the chanukas hamishkon. Then we finally get hashroas haShechinoh to come down to the mishkon – after all the lessons were learned along the way.

The Midrash explains birkas kohanim in the following way. The Kohen's brocho is a request from Hashem to bless the Jewish people. The Kohen gives a brocho to Klal Yisroel, but it has to be with ahavah. If the kohanim want Klal Yisroel to have a brocho of shemiroh and sholom with love, Hashem takes notice and He comes and bestows His blessing. We start with sending the metzora out of the machaneh, but we conclude with the Kohanim wanting to bless Klal Yisroel with love and achdus. Now we are ready for chanukas hamizbeich and hashroas haShechinoh.

These parshos are not put together at random. Each one teaches us a fundamental condition for hashroas haShechinoh among Klal Yisroel.