

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת נשא

והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו והשיב את אשמו בראשו וחמישתו יסף עליו ונתן
לאשר אשם לו

“And they shall confess their sin that they committed; he shall make restitution for his guilt in its principal amount and add its fifth to it, and give it to the one to whom he is guilty” (5:7)

This posuk teaches us the mitzva of vidui, to confess one's sins. The confession is an essential step in the process of teshuva. The Chidushei HaRim asks: Why is this mitzva of confession given specifically by the sin of stealing? He answers that every sin which a person does is connected to the act of stealing. Hashem has given everyone his individual strengths and abilities. When a person sins, he is misusing the talents and abilities that Hashem has provided him with. By sinning, he is in effect "stealing" his strength from Hashem. Our lives and talents were giving to us for a purpose. Just as eating food without making a beracha without stealing, so too using human capabilities for something antithetical to their intended purpose would also be considered stealing.

דבר אל אהרן ואל בניו לאמר כה תברכו את בני ישראל אמור להם
“Speak to Aharon and to his sons, saying: So shall you bless the Children of Israel, say to them” (6:23)

The Gerrer Rebbe points out that the posuk does not first command the Kohanim to bless the people and then discuss the nature of the blessing. Rather, it begins by saying "This is how you should bless the Jewish people," as if the fact that the Kohanim will bless the people is a given fact. This is because the Kohanim have a natural inclination toward chesed, kindness, and the question is not whether to give a beracha but how to do so. The Kohanim are those who are involved in bringing an atonement for the people and bringing peace between men.

We have to try to reach a level similar to that of Kohanim where chesed comes naturally to us. Just like the Kohanim, being kind to others should be instinctual. However, must also learn how to channel our desire to do chesed into the right methods. There are halachos governing how to give tzedaka properly and how to perform other types of chesed. For example, tzedaka should be given in a way that the recipient is not embarrassed. The Chofetz Chayim wrote a sefer called Ahavas Chesed where he discusses the proper way to do various forms of chesed, such as giving loans, tzedaka and visiting sick people.

ושמו את שמי על בני ישראל ואני אברכם
“They shall place My name on upon the Children of Israel, and I shall bless them”
(6:27)

What is the purpose of the Kohanim giving a blessing if Hashem is capable of giving a blessing Himself? Additionally, why is Hashem's name repeated in each of the three blessings? The answer is that we need the Kohanim to remind us where the blessing actually comes from. The Kohanim give three blessings, each one of which mentions that Hashem should bless us. If the blessings would come on their own, we would not recognize as easily that the blessings come from Hashem. We might attribute them to our own strength and talents. When the Kohanim bless us, we understand that all of our blessings come directly from Hashem.

It is interesting to note that the Kohanim bless the people in a singular form rather than a plural form. This teaches us that in order for Hashem's blessing to take effect, we must be united as one. Only if we have internal peace can we merit peaceful relations with the nations around us, as well as all of the other blessings contained in Birchas Kohanim.

ולבני קהת לא נתן כי עבדת הקדש עליהם בכתף ישאו
“And to the sons of Kehas he did not give, because the service of the holy is upon them; they carry on the shoulder” (7:9)

R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk writes that extra strength is necessary for "the service of the holy" and therefore one has to carry it on his shoulders rather than pull it along in a wagon. Sometimes performing mitzvos and studying Torah requires a great physical sacrifice and can be tiring. The Torah teaches us that in order to serve Hashem properly, one cannot expect to sit back and relax. Rather, one must throw himself into the service of Hashem, body and soul, in order to learn Torah and do mitzvos.

ויהי המקריב ביום הראשון את קרבנו נחשון בן עמינדב למטה יהודה
“The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nachshon son of Aminadav, of the tribe of Yehuda” (7:12)

Nachshon is the only leader who is listed without his title of "nasi." The Chizkuni explains that since Nachshon was the first to bring his sacrifices, the Torah does not mention him with his title so that he should not feel haughty because of his precedence.

Another explanation is that Nachshon's greatness was in his great act of sacrifice by the Yam Suf when he jumped into the raging waters of the sea. He did not need a special title to be a great person. This is an important lesson. Many people are special people even if they do not hold a special position or have a special title. Their greatness is in their character, not their position. The Gemara writes that the great sage Hillel was not called Rebbi Hillel because he did not need a special title to express his greatness to the people. Everyone knew what a great person he was because of his personality.

Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur
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