

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

NASO

Haftarah: Shoftim 13:2-25

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**DEDICATIONS: In Memory of Yosef Mordechai Ben Rachel
And in memory of Yitzhak ben Kaden - Mr. Isaac Goldman A"H**

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Editors Notes

A friend, Daniel Keren wrote this week, Whether you are in Israel (Tel Aviv) or even the United States (Orlando, Florida), one simply cannot take tomorrow as a given. Somebody once asked Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l, for advice on how to ask Hashem for a more effective refuah shelaimah, a complete healing from an illness. Rabbi Miller replied that the most beneficial time to ask for a refuah is when one is healthy. Thank Hashem sincerely for that precious gift and demonstrate that there is no need for Him to afflict us in order to catch our attention. The same goes for all the other gifts and benefits of life He grants us 24/7.

Muslims Yes, Jews No: The Hypocrisy of the NY Times By Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Separate swimming hours to accommodate religious sensitivities provokes hypocritical response.

This time the New York Times really outdid itself.

If there were an award for hypocrisy, the hands-down winner should clearly be the paper which has long regarded itself as “the newspaper of record.” Within the span of just a few months, the Times editorial board took heated and diametrically opposed positions on the identical issue – the only difference being whether an accommodation was being made for the religious sensitivities of Muslims or of Orthodox Jews.

This past February, when the city of Toronto allowed for women-only sessions at a public pool at specific hours at the behest of Muslim residents, the Times was delighted. Although it was a story from across the border, the editorial writers of the newspaper gushed at this beautiful demonstration of “community integration.” This was a “model of inclusion.”

Here was Canada showing us how citizens with differing views of modesty and morality could be extended the courtesy of understanding and the consideration of a policy which would be willing to extend community benefits to all at the cost of minimal sacrifice. The pool might not be open to everybody at all times, but everybody could find some times to enjoy a publicly funded recreation.

So religious accommodation, the Times effusively affirmed is a good thing even if, just like any accommodation, it requires a little compromise. But remarkably enough that is not the way they saw it at all when the ideal was now offered as justification for Orthodox Jews having a few hours during the week set aside at a municipal pool in Brooklyn for women whose religious scruples prevent them from swimming together with men.

Suddenly the former defendants of inclusiveness viewed the matter in a totally different light. This desire on the part of, as it turns out, an exceedingly large number of residents in that particular area of Williamsburg to be true to their traditions of modesty is, according to the New York Times, an affront to “the laws of New York City and the Constitution.”

The same Constitution in whose name liberals today so vociferously demand equality for same-sex marriages, unrestricted bathroom use for trans-genders and a host of other “rights” which may upset others it seems according to the interpretation of the Times is unequivocally opposed to granting consideration to Orthodox Jews for their beliefs.

It is a stunning illustration of an attitude exemplified by a classic story: An old Jewish lady sees a gentleman in a long black coat, big beard and black hat on a bus. She goes over to him and says “Why can't you Hassidim dress a bit more modernly? Why not wear a nice suit and trim your beard so you can look a bit more respectable. This is the 21st century in New York City and you are an embarrassment to all of us.”

The gentleman responds to the lady, “I am not Jewish. I am Amish and I am dressed in accord with the traditions of my people.”

The lady respectfully apologizes. “Please forgive me. I didn't realize. And by the way I truly admire the way you people have kept your customs.”

Substitute Muslims for Amish and you have the essence of New York Times anti-Semitism. As a liberal newspaper constantly on guard against the

slightest indication of the sin of racism or of Islamophobia, political correctness rules every article and editorial.

Change the victim, however, from Muslim to Jew or from Arab to Israeli and the perspective suddenly shifts 180°. One can only wonder if this almost incomprehensible insensitivity and abandonment of reason isn't in some measure due to the fact that the original owners of the Times were Jews – and history has given us more than enough examples of that remarkable phenomenon of self-hating Jews desperately trying to become beloved by denying and disparaging their own identity.

Summary of the Perasha Naso – The Leviim are counted, Korban for hakamat mishkan (year 2)

- 1- The special responsibilities of benei Gershon and Merari. Benei Kehat are counted
- 2- Benei Gershon and Merari are counted
- 3- Rules regarding a tameh and where he must stay, one who steals and swears falsely
- 4- Sotah , nazir, birkat kohanim
- 5- Korbanot offered by the leaders of each tribe on the first days of mishkan (days 1-5)
- 6- Korbanot offered by the leaders of each tribe on the first days of mishkan (days 6-10)
- 7- Korbanot offered by the leaders of each tribe on the first days of mishkan (days 11-12)

FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER

“All the days of his Nazirite vow, a razor shall not pass over his head.” (Bemidbar 6:5)

Our perashah speaks about the nazir. The Torah permits a man or woman to adopt voluntarily the status of a nazir. This includes three restrictions: a nazir is forbidden to eat or drink grapes or grape products, a nazir's hair may not be cut, and a nazir may not become contaminated by a human corpse. However nazirism should not be viewed as a list of prohibitions. Rather nazirism is a state of holiness and the individual laws flow from this elevated status.

Concerning the prohibition of haircutting, the Seforno explains, “the prohibition against trimming the hair helps one avoid thoughts of flaunting his physical beauty. At times a person takes too much pride in his beautiful hair and good looks; he can become a nazir which will prohibit grooming his hair and will be forced to cut off his beautiful hair at the end of his term as a nazir and thereby subdue his passion to sin.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn tells a story of a couple whose little boy was unusually short for his age. A non-Jewish endocrinologist suggested an

experimental growth hormone. The boy's father asked the doctor, “If this was your child, would you give him this experimental medication?”

The doctor thought for a moment before responding emotionally, “If it were my child, I would give him medication, but if I were you I wouldn't. In my society, externals are very important, good looks and height mean so much. I would have no choice but to give this hormone to my child.

“But I've met enough Orthodox Jews to know that your society is different. You people judge one another by your inner values, outward appearance is not that important. If I were you I would not give my child a new medication that might have serious side-effects.”

Let us remember the lesson of the nazir, who came to the recognition that undue focus on external appearance is not what Am Yisrael is all about. To focus on externals is to live a superficial life, a life out of touch with reality. The more we gain that recognition, the more we are in the touch with true Torah values and deepen our bond with Hashem. Rabbi Reuven Semah

This perashah is the longest one in the whole Torah. It always comes right after Shabuot as if to show us that with the Giving of the Torah on this past holiday, there is more Torah to be learned than ever before.

What is amazing about the length of this perashah is that a great portion of it is repetitious: when the Princes of each tribe donated something for the dedication ceremony, each offering was identical. The Torah lists each one individually, so as not to take away any importance from any one tribe. We can learn a great lesson from here. Although each prince had tremendous wealth and could have outdone his predecessor, each one brought the same exact amount. There was no "one upmanship" here, no one trying to make his own name greater at anyone else's expense.

This is something worth thinking about and emulating. It may not be feasible to have all our affairs and occasions in a uniform way but do we have to outdo anyone else? Shouldn't we spend only what we could afford and maybe not even that? Is being a trend setter so important to us? These are questions which many have been asking. Are we ready for someone to lead the way and for others to support them? As we read the repetition in this perashah, let's think about this point and do some soul searching. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Another Way to Say It

“Watch out! You'll fall and break your arm!”
“Don't do that! It's bad.”

“Don’t act dumb. Don’t you know you have to hold it this way if you want it to work?”

When something requires an immediate corrective or preventive action, you don’t have much time to think. The fast course is the best course. It is the only way to prevent a dangerous mishap or serious error.

This way of thinking gives you license to express the warning, the disciplining, or the criticism in any way, shape, manner, or form – doesn’t it? Not really. Sometimes the best course for right now is not always best for the long term. For example, you may prevent a child from falling or cutting a finger or getting burned – but you may damage the child’s self-esteem by criticizing the child rather than the behavior. The same is true of a student, employee, or, more importantly, a spouse. Someone who sees a problem has the right – if not the obligation – to give fair warning or good advice. The thing the criticizer must realize, however, is that there is always more than one way to deliver the message.

Instead of telling another than an action was “dumb” or “bad,” it is wiser and more productive to think before speaking. The same idea can be expressed as a helpful suggestion rather than a personal condemnation. “I have found that when I do it this way, I get it done much more quickly. In fact, I have found that it is not only quicker but better. Why don’t you give it a try? I think you’ll thank me later.”

The problem with this commonsense approach is that in the heat of the moment it is difficult to implement. The best way to learn to use this technique is by practicing, but since you cannot practice under fire, you should try exercising your patience when you are not under the gun. In a calm moment, when it is not so important how you do something, suggest a better way to a friend or relative. Discuss it; don’t shout it. In time you will improve your “calm-quotient,” and your good intentions will become reality.

After all, you did want to help – didn’t you?
(One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
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Marital Harmony

The Torah in Parashat Naso discusses the procedure of the “Sota,” which was required when a husband had reason to suspect his wife of infidelity. He would bring her to the Bet Ha’mikdash where the Kohen would conduct a special ceremony whereby her innocence or guilt would be determined.

In introducing this section, the Torah writes, “Ish Ish Ki Tisteh Ishto...” – “If a man’s wife strays...” The

question immediately arises as to why the Torah here repeats the word “Ish” (“man”), as though it was saying, “A man, a man whose wife strays...” What is the purpose of this repetition?

One of the scholars of Musar suggested that the Torah here subtly addresses the question of why a married woman would enter into an extramarital relationship. What might cause a woman to betray her husband? The answer, the Torah teaches us, is often “Ish Ish” – that the marriage was only about the husband. A marriage is supposed to be “Ish Isha” – a husband and wife. But when one spouse dominates the relationship, concerning himself or herself with only his or her concerns and interests, without giving proper consideration and regard to those of the other spouse, the other spouse might naturally feel tempted to find emotional satisfaction elsewhere. Of course, this does not justify betrayal. But the Torah cautions the husband that a situation of “Ish Ish,” if he does not pay sufficient attention to his wife’s needs and wishes, if he does not show her respect and care, he unwittingly builds her temptation to pursue other sources of gratification.

The Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204) writes that a husband is required to “honor his wife more than himself.” Marriage must never become a one-way street. Each must respect and look out for the needs and wishes of the other, rather than focusing only on his or her own interests. This mutual care, respect and attention will help ensure that both spouses receive the happiness and satisfaction they seek, that the marriage will serve them both as an everlasting source of joy and fulfillment.

VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein
SUMMERTIME

No matter what official calendars may say, there is no question that the summer has arrived here in Israel. We have had quite a number of hot spells already and there will undoubtedly be many more over the coming months. Summer generally has become synonymous with leisure, vacations, trips and a more relaxed view of life.

Naturally, there are always uncertain events, completely unpredictable and unforeseen, that can interfere with this idyllic view of the season. Yet, we

still all hope that this will be a hot summer only in terms of weather and not of politics, government, or strife, God for bid. The hallmark of summer is that schools are pretty much shut down and children are freed from their daily scholastic chores.

There is a responsa written in the late twelfth century in France by Rabbi Isaac of Dampiere (RI), a great-nephew of Rashi and one of the chief editors of the Tosafot, that discusses the necessity to grant children time off from study. It seems that a certain father had hired a tutor to teach his child Torah studies. The tutor did so on a daily basis but after a period of time he demanded the right to take off for a day.... and not to being caged in teaching the child during that particular time.

The father was angered by this behavior of the tutor and attempted to discharge him, even though he admitted that otherwise the tutor was doing a good job. The tutor appealed to Rabbi Isaac for his wages and his position. The great Rabbi Isaac decided that the tutor was wrongfully injured in this manner and should be restored to his position and livelihood.

In addition Rev. Isaac commented that it is beneficial for students to have a certain period of time free from studies in order to refresh and be able, therefore, to become better students when their studies resume. I had the opportunity of repeating this to a certain educator here in Israel who complained that teachers have too much time off. I told him that I thought that it all depends on the teacher, the students and the circumstances that accompany that free time.

Here in Israel, summertime is travel time both within and without the country. We Israelis are a restless, traveling population. Believe it or not, I have already heard a number of friends of mine complain that they have been everywhere, seen everything and that there is nowhere new to go.

I have held my tongue and not recommended any potential new sites for them to visit. But I am a convinced that for many, traveling itself is the experience, not the destination or the museum or the scenery that is advertised in the travel brochure. There was a time when travel was a much more difficult chore than it is today, as the automobile and the airplane have combined to shrink the world.

And summer usually provides the best time of the year to satisfy this travel lust. Israelis leave to see the world in the summer and there are a large number of tourists who arrive to visit Israel and see its splendor during the warm summer months. The feel of the streets of Jerusalem in the summer is different than it

is the rest of the year. It is somewhat more carefree, more relaxed and certainly louder than it is during other times of the year.

Air-conditioning was a late arrival in the Israeli lifestyle, but now that it has arrived it is exploited with a vengeance. One wonders how even a few decades ago people functioned and were satisfied with their lives during the hot summer before air-conditioning became available.

Electricity is relatively expensive in our country and therefore people are rather frugal in deciding whether or not to turn on the air conditioning in their homes and apartments. However, by now, all public buildings and most commercial establishments have air-conditioning and use it to a considerable and constant extent during the summer months.

Jerusalem usually has cool nights even in the summer, so the use of air-conditioning in order to sleep comfortably is not an absolute necessity. The Talmud records for us that there was an evening breeze that daily swept up any debris that may have collected during the day on the Temple Mount. There are echoes of that breeze that still occur during the summer months here in present-day Jerusalem. It comes to remind us of our heritage and of the fact that we have been here a long time and that, in many ways, things really have not changed over the millennia of our history.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Blessing of Love

At 176 verses, Naso is the longest of the parshiyot. Yet one of its most moving passages, and the one that has had the greatest impact over the course of history, is very short indeed and is known by almost every Jew, namely the priestly blessings:

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'Thus shall you bless the Israelites. Say to them:

May Lord bless you and protect you;
May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you;
May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.'

Let them set My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." (Num. 6:23-27)

This is among the oldest of all prayer texts. It was used by the priests in the Temple. It is said today by the cohanim in the reader's repetition of the Amidah, in Israel every day, in most of the Diaspora only on

festivals. It is used by parents as they bless their children on Friday night. It is often said to the bride and groom under the chuppah. It is the simplest and most beautiful of all blessings.

It also appears in the oldest of all biblical texts that have physically survived to today. In 1979 the archeologist Gabriel Barkay was examining ancient burial caves at Ketef Hinnom, outside the walls of Jerusalem in the area now occupied by the Menachem Begin Heritage Center. A thirteen-year-old boy who was assisting Barkay discovered that beneath the floor of one of the caves was a hidden chamber. There the group discovered almost one thousand ancient artefacts including two tiny silver scrolls no more than an inch long.

They were so fragile that it took three years to work out a way of unrolling them without causing them to disintegrate. Eventually the scrolls turned out to be kemayot, amulets, containing, among other texts, the priestly blessings. Scientifically dated to the sixth century BCE, the age of Jeremiah and the last days of the First Temple, they are four centuries older than the most ancient of biblical texts known hitherto, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Today the amulets can be seen in the Israel Museum, testimony to the ancient connection of Jews to the land and the continuity of Jewish faith itself.

What gives them their power is their simplicity and beauty. They have a strong rhythmic structure. The lines contain three, five, and seven words respectively. In each, the second word is "the Lord". In all three verses the first part refers to an activity on the part of God – "bless", "make His face shine", and "turn His face toward". The second part describes the effect of the blessing on us, giving us protection, grace and peace.

They also travel inward, as it were. The first verse "May Lord bless you and protect you," refers, as the commentators note, to material blessings: sustenance, physical health and so on. The second, "May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you," refers to moral blessing. Chen, grace, is what we show to other people and they to us. It is interpersonal. Here we are asking God to give some of His grace to us and others so that we can live together without the strife and envy that can so easily poison relationships.

The third is the most inward of all. There is a lovely story about a crowd of people who have gathered on a hill by the sea to watch a great ship pass by. A young child is waving vigorously. One of the men in the crowd asks him why. He says, "I am waving so

the captain of the ship can see me and wave back." "But," said the man, "the ship is far away, and there is a crowd of us here. What makes you think that the captain can see you?" "Because," said the boy, "the captain of the ship is my father. He will be looking for me among the crowd."

That is roughly what we mean when we say, "May the Lord turn His face toward you." There are seven billion people now living on this earth. What makes us any of us more than a face in the crowd, a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the sea shore? The fact that we are God's children. He is our parent. He turns His face toward us. He cares.

The God of Abraham is not a mere force of nature or even all the forces of nature combined. A tsunami does not pause to ask who its victims will be. There is nothing personal about an earthquake or a tornado. The word Elokim means something like "the force of forces, cause of causes, the totality of all scientifically discoverable laws." It refers to those aspects of God that are impersonal. It also refers to God in His attribute of justice, since justice is essentially impersonal.

But the name we call Hashem – the name used in the priestly blessings, and in almost all the priestly texts – is God as He relates to us as persons, individuals, each with our unique configuration of hopes and fears, gifts and possibilities. Hashem is the aspect of God that allows us to use the word "You". He is the God who speaks to us and who listens when we speak to Him. How this happens, we do not know, but that it happens is central to Jewish faith.

That we call God Hashem is the transcendental confirmation of our significance in the scheme of things. We matter as individuals because God cares for us as a parent for a child. That, incidentally, is one reason why the priestly blessings are all in the singular, to emphasise that God blesses us not only collectively but also individually. One life, said the sages, is like a universe.

Hence the meaning of the last of the priestly blessings. The knowledge that God turns His face toward us – that we are not just an indiscernible face in a crowd, but that God relates to us in our uniqueness and singularity – is the most profound and ultimate source of peace. Competition, strife, lawlessness and violence come from the psychological need to prove that we matter. We do things to prove that I am more powerful, or richer, or more successful than you. I can make you fear. I can bend you to my will. I can turn you into my victim, my subject, my slave. All of these things testify not to

faith but to a profound failure of faith.

Faith means that I believe that God cares about me. I am here because He wanted me to be. The soul He gave me is pure. Even though I am like the child on the hill watching the ship pass by, I know that God is looking for me, waving to me as I wave to Him. That is the most profound inner source of peace. We do not need to prove ourselves in order to receive a blessing from God. All we need to know is that His face is turned toward us. When we are at peace with ourselves, we can begin to make peace with the world.

So the blessings become longer and deeper: from the external blessing of material goods to the interpersonal blessing of grace between ourselves and others, to the most inward of them all, the peace of mind that comes when we feel that God sees us, hears us, holds us in His everlasting arms.

One further detail of the priestly blessings is unique, namely the blessing that the sages instituted to be said by the cohanim over the mitzvah: "Blessed are you ... who has made us holy with the holiness of Aaron and has commanded us to bless His people Israel with love."

It is the last word, be-ahavah, that is unusual. It appears in no other blessing over the performance of a command. It seems to make no sense. Ideally we should fulfill all the commands with love. But an absence of love does not invalidate any other command. In any case, the blessing over the performance of a command is a way of showing that we are acting intentionally. There was an argument between the sages as to whether mitzvot in general require intention (kavanah) or not. But whether they do or not, making a blessing beforehand shows that we do have the intention to fulfill the command. But intention is one thing, emotion is another. Surely what matters is that the cohanim recite the blessing and God will do the rest. What difference does it make whether they do so in love or not?

The commentators wrestle with this question. Some say that the fact that the cohanim are facing the people when they bless means that they are like the cherubim in the Tabernacle, whose faces "were turned to one another" as a sign of love. Others change the word order. They say that the blessing really means, "who has made us holy with the holiness of Aaron and with love has commanded us to bless His people Israel." "Love" here refers to God's love for Israel, not that of the cohanim.

However, it seems to me that the explanation is this:

the Torah explicitly says that though the cohanim say the words, it is God who sends the blessing. "Let them put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." Normally when we fulfill a mitzvah, we are doing something. But when the cohanim bless the people, they are not doing anything in and of themselves. Instead they are acting as channels through which God's blessing flows into the world and into our lives. Only love does this. Love means that we are focused not on ourselves but on another. Love is selflessness. And only selflessness allows us to be a channel through which flows a force greater than ourselves, the love that as Dante said, "moves the sun and the other stars", the love that brings new life into the world.

To bless, we must love, and to be blessed is to know that we are loved by the One vaster than the universe who nonetheless turns His face toward us as a parent to a beloved child. To know that is to find true spiritual peace.

Rabbi Mirvis

What does our Parasha teach us about 'keeping up with the Joneses'?

Upon the dedication of a new altar in the Temple, why do the Nesiim make identical, rather than individual offerings to Hashem? An interesting lesson emerges from the Torah's longest parasha, teaches the Chief Rabbi. You can find the full transcript below.

Nearly every single year, the Parasha of Naso is read on the Shabbat immediately following the festival of Shavuot. You will notice in Shul this Shabbat that Naso is clearly the longest of all our parshiot. And it is important. Immediately after the anniversary of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, we want to show that no amount of Torah is too long for us to listen to, to pay attention to, and to internalise the messages therefrom.

But actually if there is a Barmitzvah this Shabbat, you don't have to feel too sorry for the Barmitzvah boy, because three out of the seven columns of the parasha are pure repetition. Why is that the case?

'We want to show that no amount of Torah is too long for us to listen to, to pay attention to'

In that section we read about the bringing of the korbanot, the sacrifices, by the Nesiim, the heads of the tribes, immediately following the dedication of the altar. And each one brought the identical offering, hence the repetition.

The Midrash tells us that it was actually the Nasi on

the second day of the sacrificial order – he was Natanel, the son of Tzuar, of the Tribe of Yissakhar, who was the hero of this passage. Why is that the case?

On the first day Nachshon, the son of Aminadav of the Tribe of Yehuda brought his offering. On the second day all eyes were on Netanel. What was he going to bring? How would he bring something more spectacular, even better than the first day's offering?

Netanel realised that if he would do something in that vein, then on the third day the Nasi would try to even better what he had done and so on. Consequently he decided that he would bring the identical sacrifice, and therefore we read all twelve paragraphs, and they are exactly the same.

'We read all twelve paragraphs, and they are exactly the same'

There is a powerful message that emerges from this text. So often we find – for example when it comes to personal events, family simchas – we are looking all around to think 'What do others think about our private event?'

As a result, so many families engage in totally unnecessary expenditure because they are trying to do better than others. From the Parasha of Naso we learn that it's crucially important that we do what is right, and indeed when it comes to communal affairs, one upmanship should have absolutely no place in our midst.

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL
"And they shall put my name upon the Sons of
Israel and I shall bless them" (6:27)**

This was an extraordinary prerogative which Hashem conferred upon the Cohanim, that because of their pronouncing the blessings upon Israel these blessings would be fulfilled. But one important purpose of this arrangement by Hashem is clearly apparent: that the people should desire the approval of the Cohen.

Of the Cohanim it was said: "They shall teach your judgments to Jacob, and your Torah to Israel; they shall put incense to your nose and whole-burnt offering upon your Mizbeach (Alter)" (Devarim 33:10). "And you shall come to the Cohanim, the Levites, or to the judge...and you shall do according to the word that they shall tell you...you shall not turn aside to the right or the left" (ibid. 17:10-11).

When Israel's blessings would depend on the utterances of the Cohen, the nation would certainly

seek to find favor in the eyes of the Cohen and obey their teachings with more alacrity. We learn here the lesson that Hashem blesses those whom His servants favor. The Cohanim are singled out by the Torah, but in principle we perceive that Hashem hearkens to the blessings of all that serve Him: "He that has in his home someone that is ill, should go to a Torah Sage to pray for him" (Baba Batra 116A). Men are thereby induced to obey the Torah teachers because they understand that Hashem would hearken to blessings of His servants upon other men. Thus a father urged his son to go to the Sages that had come to town "so that they should bless you" (Moed Kattan 9B). We thereby seek to obey the Sages and to find favor in their eyes, for the Cohanim and the Sages are heard by Hashem when they utter blessings.

Question: "Israelites are blessed by Cohanim; who blesses the Cohanim?" (Hullin 49A). One answer (ibid.): "and I shall bless them" means "I shall bless the Cohanim" when they bless My people. Another answer (ibid.) is that Hashem told Abraham "I shall bless those who bless you" (Beresheet 12:3). Both answers teach an extremely valuable lesson: To Bless Jews is a deed which is richly rewarded by Hashem. Even when the blessing was said as a formality, as when a gentile encountered the Nasi, the Nasi declared that the gentile would receive Hashem's blessing in accordance with the declaration to Abraham "I shall bless those who bless you".

Then how much greater is the blessing of Hashem upon those that wholeheartedly bless a Jew! He that passes a Jewish home and utters blessings upon that household, although none but Hashem heard his words, has thereby gained a blessing from Hashem Himself. "For Hashem loves only those that love Israel" (Mesilat Yesharim Ch. 19).

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