



Parshas Naso

May 21, 2021

A Taste of Torah

The Loyal Friend

by Rabbi Chaim Gross

Figuring out where to focus one's attention and effort in life can be challenging, especially when some things seem more attractive. This lesson comes through this week's parsha. The verse (Bamidbar 5:10) states, "A man's holies shall be his, [and] that which a man gives to a kohen shall be his."

One phrase, repeated twice in this verse, catches the reader's attention, as it is strikingly ambiguous. We are told that the items listed here, both a man's holies as well as that which he gives to the kohen "shall be his." To whom, exactly, do they belong to the kohen or to the giver? And what does it mean that his holies shall be his - inasmuch as the items are sanctified and holy, it would seem they are not really his. (See Rashi for a basic approach to the verse.)

The saintly Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1838-1933) picks up on these words and masterfully explains them with a powerful parable (updated for today's world), one that speaks so much to today's generation sheds a new light upon the world around us:

There once lived a fellow - let's call him Moshe. Moshe was a proud member of his community, but he was even more proud of the friendships he had cultivated over the years. Especially important to him was his close relationship with Dovid, who was the most prestigious and wealthy man in town. Second on his list was Berel, who, while not quite in the same class as Dovid, was still a very influential figure in their neighborhood. And then, yes, he did have a third friend, if you could call him that; a man named Yehuda. Yehuda was a kind-hearted fellow, always trying to go out of his way to do a favor for Moshe and give a smile when they passed each other. But, being that Yehuda wasn't from the rich or the famous, Moshe never paid much attention to him - to be

perfectly honest.

Then came the dreaded letter in the mail. It seemed that the government suspected Moshe of a serious violation - one that could result in many a year behind bars, if not a lifetime sentence. He was being summoned to court. Moshe desperately needed help, and he knew just whom to call. He reached for his phone and selected speed-dial #2 (#1 was his wife). The phone rang, and then he heard his dear friend Dovid at the other end. But the words were not what he had expected. "Moshe, I've already heard the news - and this ends our relationship. Goodbye." The phone went dead.

Moshe's heart dropped. How could his friend leave him, just like that? But, no matter - he could still rely on Berel to clear things up. He punched #3 into the phone, and Berel answered. After exchanging a few words of sympathy, Dovid asked his friend for the big favor; would he agree to appear in court on testify on his behalf? There was an uncomfortable silence. Finally, Berel answered candidly: "I will come along with you to the court building - but I can't come in to testify. I'm sorry; you will have to look elsewhere."

Now Moshe really felt like crying. He racked his brains as to whom he could turn - and that's when he remembered Yehuda. But did he even have his number? Scrolling through his contacts, he realized that he did indeed have it, and, after a moment's hesitation, decided to give it a try. As the phone rang, images appeared in Moshe's mind - snippets of all the times Yehuda had attempted to befriend him and Moshe had responded halfheartedly and without enthusiasm... Then Yehuda picked up. Before Moshe could say a word, Yehuda's kind voice could be heard: "Moshe, don't worry about a thing. I will come with you to

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Stories for the Soul

Night Classes

A newly-married yeshiva student studying in the Mir Yeshiva in Brooklyn, NY was in the *bais medrash* nightly studying with his *chavrusa* (study partner) until midnight. Rabbi Shmuel Brudny (1915-1981), the Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) of the Mir, approached the fellow and said, "I heard you are learning at night with so-and-so. Can I ask where you are studying?"

"In the yeshiva," replied the newlywed. "That's wonderful," said Rabbi Brudny, "but it might be a better idea for you to study at home."

The young man protested that he much preferred the atmosphere of the yeshiva *bais medrash*, but Rabbi Brudny concluded, "Think it over."

Several days later, Rabbi Brudny again broached the subject, and the young man again replied that he preferred studying in the yeshiva.

"Anyway," said the newlywed, "my wife goes to sleep early and wouldn't know the difference."

"Everyone wants to know they got a good deal," said Rabbi Brudny. "Your wife's father told her she married a Torah scholar who studies all the time. If, as she is retiring for the night, she hears you learning Torah in the next room, she will fall asleep thinking, 'I got a good deal.'"

The fellow followed his rebbi's advice and spent his nights studying at home. This week's parsha discusses the process of a *sotah*, a woman suspected of adultery. Our Sages teach us that the ultimate purpose of this process is to absolve the woman of wrongdoing (if she is indeed innocent) and to restore *shalom bayis*, marital harmony, in the home. Great effort must be invested in creating and sustaining *shalom bayis*.

Kollel Happenings

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE TO INCLUDE IN A NEWS PUBLICATION AT JUNE 3 T4T ON ZOOM

The world of media has changed greatly in recent years, and the ethical challenges that confront a journalist have evolved with them. Join Rabbi Hillel Goldberg, PhD, Editor and Publisher of Intermountain Jewish News, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they press forward in mediating this subject at the June 3 T4T. Visit denverkollel.org for further details.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST FROM THE KOLLEL

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Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: How is it possible for the *bracha* of an item to vary between *ha'adama* and *shehakol* based on why it was planted?

Answer: A fruit that grows wild and is not usually a secondary product of a plant, and is not the intended product of the plant, requires only a *shehakol*, not *ha'adama*. Thus, if one planted a seed with one of the plant's products in mind, the other secondary product would require a *shehakol*. If the plant was planted for the second product, that product would

require *ha'adama*.

Pumpkin seeds are a good example. If one grew pumpkins for the actual pumpkin, the seed would be *shehakol*. If, however, one grew them for the seeds (which is the case for commercially-produced pumpkin seeds), the *bracha* would be *ha'adama* (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 202:3 with Mishna Berura 23 and Shu"t Or Letzion 2:4:10).

This week's question: How can the need to make a *bracha* change based on whether one is a guest?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part XXX

Rav Saadia's brilliant arguments and unyielding battles against heretical movements within Judaism, particularly the Karaites, checked their influence on the Jewish world, though the Karaites would remain a force for centuries to come. Rav Saadia created a framework that enabled Jews living in Moslem society to flourish as loyal Jews even as they interacted with the

culture and society around them. It is fitting to conclude with the Rambam's assessment of the lasting impact of Rav Saadia Gaon: *Were it not for Rav Saadia Gaon, the Torah would have almost disappeared from Jewish people. For it was he who shed light on that which was obscure strengthened that which had been weakened, and spread the Torah far and wide, by word of mouth and in writing.*

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court and testify on your behalf. I will clear your name and reputation."

And so it was.

Says the Chofetz Chaim: Every person, without exception, will eventually receive a "summons" to appear before the Heavenly Court in judgement. He will reach his final day of reckoning. And he, like Moshe in the story, will turn to the "friend" in whom he invested most of his life: Money and material possessions. The friend will answer him short and to the point: You're on your own - I cannot go with you.

He will then turn to his next-best friend, his close family and relatives. They will reply, "We will accompany you to the burial, but that's as far as we can go. We cannot enter the court with you."

Finally, out of desperation, he will turn to the friend who he had never invested much effort in building a relationship with - Torah learning and good deeds. Yes, he engaged on a basic level over the years,

but his mind was always elsewhere; at any rate, they certainly didn't rank high on his list of priorities. Now, with no choice, he shamefacedly approaches them to request their assistance in his time of need. And they alone will accompany him as he stands before the Almighty.

This, explains the Chofetz Chaim, is the deeper meaning of the verse quoted above. For only that which one consecrates to be given for exalted purposes, that which he gives away for his Creator - be it time, money, or effort - will truly be *his*. They will stay with him at his side during his time of need, while all that he invested in his own selfish desires will part from him forever.

In a society and environment that places such an emphasis on physicality, material wealth and rubbing shoulders with the elite of society, it is that much more important to hold on to the Torah's message - to invest one's time not in the transient and mortal, but in that which is spiritual and eternal.

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