

Parashas
Naso

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י"א סיון תשפ"ה
5785

י"ז ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
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טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

במעלת כל אחד מישראל

The virtue of every one of Israel

טיב המערכת

איש כי יפליא

A man who will set himself apart

Let us imagine the palace of a king. The king sits in the luxurious hall and waits for his lunch to be served. Indeed, immediately, the chief chef of the palace arrives and places before the king a plate upon which are fine delicacies, the work of his hands to be admired. But the king becomes angry and furious. Why? Because the plate upon which the foods are placed is dirty. Yet the chef, instead of apologizing, explains to the king that this plate was used by the cleaning staff to remove the waste from the table during the previous meal. At that point, the king's anger is surely greatly intensified. For this is a disgrace to the king of the highest order, and the chef, although he merely presented the king with his meal, is sentenced to death for his terrible audacity.

Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai said that if he had been present at the giving of the Torah, he would have requested from HaKadosh Baruch Hu that from then on *Bnei Yisrael* should have two mouths: one for the study of Torah and the other for all other needs. But after some time, Rebbe Shimon retracted his words, because he saw that people struggle to guard even one mouth from forbidden speech. So if they had two mouths, they would struggle even more to guard them. Therefore, he said, it is good that a person has only one mouth.

Our parasha teaches us the power of the mouth. A regular person stands and says two words: "Behold, I am a Nazirite." At that moment, he becomes sanctified, and all the laws of Nazirite status apply to him—even though outwardly there is no visible change in his appearance. Yet the two words he spoke changed his very essence, and now he is someone else.

We have just received the Torah, but Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai teaches us an important principle: in order for the Torah to remain with us and endure, the mouth must be clean. For if the mouth is not clean, we are truly like that chef who serves the king his meal on a filthy dish. The mouth, which presents Torah and prayer to Hashem Yisbarach must be pure. And the "Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh" says: "I found that the pious ones of Israel wrote that the mouth of one who studies Torah is considered like a sacred vessel used for service in holiness, for there is no sanctity like the sanctity of Torah. Therefore, it is forbidden to speak even mundane words with it, even if they do not contain anything forbidden."

- Tiv HaTorah - Naso

נָשָׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי קֹהֵת מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי לֵוִי לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתֵם: נָשָׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן גַּם הֵם לְבֵית אֲבֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם: בְּנֵי מֵרָרִי לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתֵם תִּפְקֹד (אֹתָם: ד:ב, כב, כט)

Take a census of the sons of Kehas from among the sons of Levi, according to their families, according to their fathers' house. Take a census of the sons of Gershon, them as well, according to their fathers' house, according to their families. The sons of Merari, according to their families, according to their fathers' house shall you count them. (4:2, 22, 29)

The sons of Kehas, the sons of Gershon, and the sons of Merari are the three families of Shevet Levi who merited and were commanded to carry the Mishkan from place to place, to dismantle it from its previous location, and to erect it in its new place.

The most distinguished among them were the sons of Kehas, who were commanded to carry the holiest items: the Ark, the altars, and the Menorah. Below them were the sons of Gershon, who were commanded regarding the curtains of the Mishkan. Below them were the sons of Merari, who were commanded with the most difficult and burdensome items—the beams of the Mishkan.

These commandments certainly also come to teach us ways of service for all generations, for the Torah is eternal, and necessarily, everything stated in it comes to instruct eternally. And although in the plain meaning of these verses, one finds only instructions for the family of Kehas while they were in the wilderness, the details of these matters hint at paths of life necessary for every Jew in all times.

It is fitting to quote from the holy *sefer Beis Avraham* (Slonim), which speaks about the general divine service hinted at in these *posukim*. The essence of his words is that these three families represent three aspects and levels in which a person may find himself. In every state and level, it is incumbent upon a person to serve the Creator Baruch Hu according to his strength and ability. And even one who is on a low level should not belittle the *aodah* appointed to him from Heaven. He must know that just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires the service of the one on a high level, so too He desires the service of the one on a low level. The delight that is aroused through his lowly service cannot be aroused by the lofty service of his fellow.

And here are his words: "The sons of Kehas are those upon whom the service of the holy rests—'they shall carry on the shoulder.' They are the ones close to Hashem and see the greatness of His glory. Therefore it is written regarding them (4:19) 'וזאת עשו להם וחיו ולא ימותו בגשתם את, - קודש הקדשים' 'And do this for them and they shall live and not die when they approach the Holy of Holies'—meaning, from the immense fear of

Hashem and the majesty of His glory, they would die from the expiration of the soul, and this instruction is so that they will have the strength to remain in their souls.

Below them are the sons of Gershon. 'Gershon' is from the expression (Shmuel I 26:19), 'כי גרשוני היום מלהסתפח בנחלת ה' - 'for they have driven me out today from attaching myself to the inheritance of the Lord'—they stand in the struggles of the *yetzer*. There are indeed times when he is close, and there are times when he is in a state of being cast out. Of them it is written (4:24), 'לעבוד ולמשא' - 'to serve and to bear'—at times it is in the aspect of service, and at times in the aspect of burden.

Below them is the aspect of the sons of Merari, from the expression *merirus* (bitterness). They are filled with bitterness. If regarding the two aspects of Kehat and Gershon it is written in the language of 'נשא את ראש' - 'lift the head', meaning they have an aspect of 'head' (importance, leadership), regarding the sons of Merari it does not say at all the phrase 'lift the head.' Rather, it begins with the phrase 'בני מררי למשפחותם' - 'the sons of Merari according to their families'—they have no aspect of 'head' at all. Therefore, it is written regarding them (4:32), 'זאת משמרת משאם' - 'This is the duty of their burden'—they do not feel the aspect of 'holy service,' only the aspect of 'burden.' And it is the beams of the Mishkan, difficult things that burden the body.

However, through all these, the name of Yisbarach becomes great and sanctified. Just as there are servants of the king who deal with the royal crown, so too there must be servants of the king who prepare shoes for His feet. 'ומלאה הארץ קניניך' - 'The earth is filled with Your possessions' (Tehillim 104:24)—the earth and all its fullness are filled with matters through which one may acquire Him, Yisbarach Shemo. And each and every person must know to fulfill his role according to the will of the King." End of his words.

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A similar idea also emerges from the words of the Maharal in his *sefer Gur Aryeh*, and these are his words: "It appears that there were three types of service: the service of the sons of Kehas, who carried the sacred vessels, and due to their importance, Elazar

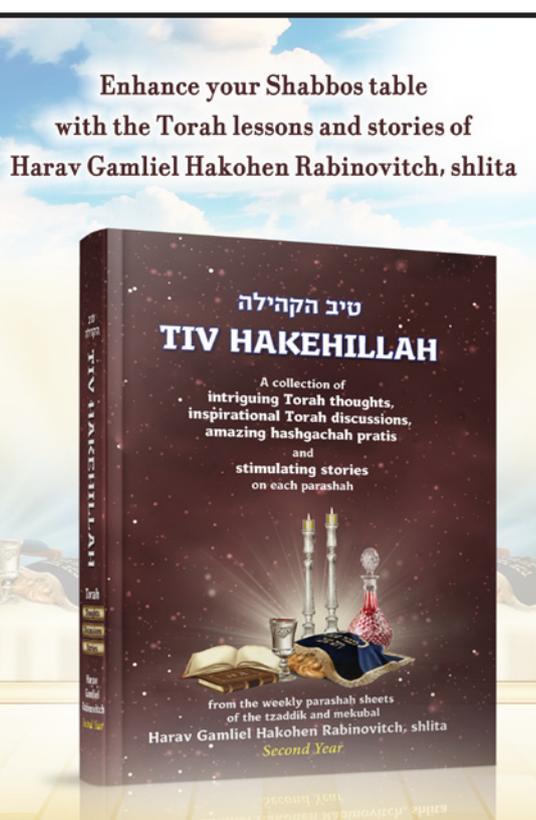
the son of Aharon was appointed over them. The last were the sons of Merari, who carried the beams of the Mishkan, and over them was appointed Isamar the son of Aharon HaKohen. Gershon was like an intermediary between the services. Therefore, the Torah states that their charge was under the general supervision of Aharon and his sons, because the intermediary always resembles the general category, as the intermediary inclines to both sides. And since the service of the Gershoni is like the middle between the service of the Kehasi and that of the Merari, their service was general, as it leans toward both. Therefore, Aharon and his sons were appointed over them. However, we elevate in matters of holiness and do not lower, so this [oversight] belonged to Elazar, who had already been given a holier task—that is, the charge of the Kehasi. All the more so Aharon, who was even more distinguished than Elazar, thus the oversight remained with Isamar the son of Aharon," end quote. The conclusion of all this is that people who are suited for Torah study and are like the "family of Kehas," who carried the Ark of the Covenant, which alludes to Torah, must engage solely in Torah and *avodas Hashem*. However, even those who are similar to "the sons of Gershon" and "the sons of Merari," who were on a lower level than them, must nevertheless cleave to holiness and do everything within their power regarding divine service. Even concerning their physical needs, they must

strive to find roles that are in the category of "within the Mishkan," through which they can remain attached to the bond of holiness. And if they direct all their affairs for the sake of Heaven, they will thereby arouse a divine delight that cannot be awakened even by those who devote their entire day to Torah.

This was one of the motivations behind the strategy of the Rebbe of Gur, the *Beis Yisrael*, who instructed his community to establish many shuls—*shtieblach*, meaning that they would divide into many groups, and each group would gather on their own and establish their Tefillos in a *shtiebel* that served as their shul. Thus, each individual would find for himself some role within the shul, because each group would need to appoint for themselves *gabba'im*, *shamashim*, *baalei tefillah*, *baal koreh* [Torah reader], and other roles needed by the community. In this way, the outcome would be that even those who were not of a high spiritual level would find for themselves some connection to the bond of holiness.

It is well known that when the spirit of secular enlightenment spread through the vineyard of the House of Israel, it caused great destruction even among the camp of the G-d-fearing and tragically caused many spiritual casualties. However, among the Chassidic communities, it almost did no harm, because they ensured that each member of their circle had some form of spiritual fulfillment. They saw it necessary to assign a particular mission to anyone who needed it, in order to keep him within Judaism. Likewise, they greatly praised every small act done for the sake of Heaven, so that everyone felt they had a place within their community and did not feel the need to dig for themselves broken cisterns.

In light of the above, it may be said that for this reason our parashah counts each family of the sons of Levi individually—to teach that each family is equally beloved before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and due to their importance, each family is worthy of being counted on its own. Likewise, every individual in Israel is deserving of respect, even if he is of a lower spiritual level, as Shlomo HaMelech said (Shir HaShirim 4:7): 'כולך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך' - "You are altogether beautiful, my beloved, and there is no blemish in you."



‘Kindness that is in kindness’

I opened a house for Torah and holiness in one of the states in the United States, to bring the hearts of the Jewish people closer to their Father in Heaven. Everything functioned beautifully, and we merited to draw close and assist many Jews in the area. After several years of extensive activity, the lease contract was nearing its end, and the landlord, realizing that this was an active place, took advantage of the situation and demanded an exorbitant amount or, alternatively, offered that I vacate the premises at the end of the lease.

We were very broken over the matter, and I did not know how I should proceed. I called my Rav to consult with him. He said to look for a place to purchase. “But I have no money and no budget!!!” The Rav replied that sometimes one needs to jump into the water, and the salvation of Hashem comes in the blink of an eye.

Despite my fear of entering into a process of purchasing a building when I did not have a penny to my name, I followed the guidance of the chachamim and began searching for a suitable building. After a short time, I indeed found a building that had served as a house of worship, now standing like a stone with no one to turn it over, because their congregation had not set foot there for many years and they had neither the funding nor the justification to maintain the place. The place was perfect for our activity, both in terms of location and in terms of the spacious arrangement of the halls. It was as if the architect had designed the place specifically for our needs and activity. When I heard the asking price, it was truly a laughable price—but even jokes require funding.

I approached the bank to inquire whether I could receive a loan and what the monthly repayment would be. The monthly mortgage payment was two thousand five hundred dollars. But here the story only begins. When we delved into the details of the deal, the seller told me that they had a huge parking lot adjacent to the property, which they had no use for, and they rented the parking area to a nearby hospital due to the general parking shortage in the area. The monthly amount they receive for the parking lot is four thousand five hundred dollars.

As soon as I heard this, I understood how much Divine Providence there was here. Not only was it a perfect house for Torah and prayer, not only was there a steady income to cover the mortgage, but also an additional two thousand dollars for ongoing expenses.

I thought there would be a miracle and a large donor would come and pay everything, but I saw that there are many paths to the destination, and Baruch Hashem, the place is active, there is great blessing and Heavenly assistance [Siyata D’shmaya]. (It is needless to say that we did everything with the guidance of a halachic authority.)

י.ל.

Derech Eretz Precedes Torah

There is a well-know saying of Chazal (D’vei Eliyahu, chapter 1): דָּרְךָ אֶרֶץ קֹדְמָה לְתוֹרָה - “proper conduct precedes Torah.” During the seven weeks of Sefiras Ha’omer, we prepared for Shavuos by refining our character traits, each week focusing on a specific middah.

The teachings of Pirkei Avos, filled with guidance for upright behavior and personal development, are among the best ways to preserve the Kabbalas HaTorah we accepted upon ourselves on Shavuos.

The Needs of Our Generation

The name Pirkei Avos hints that it is the “father” of all sefarim of mussar and yiras Shamayim. All the mussar found in the holy texts and moral writings stem from this “father” of mussar, good middos, and proper behavior.

The greatness of this masseches surpasses that of all ethical works, for it is entirely drawn from the words of the early Sages, the holy tanna'im, who were like fiery angels. Their words are like coals of fire—living words of God.

In a shiur I delivered (by broadcast) to an audience of talmidei chachamim and aspiring individuals in the United States, I discussed the immense obligation to study mussar daily. I also admonished the neglect of this essential study in many yeshivos, where time is rarely devoted to it, except during the month of Elul.

Following that shiur, a rosh yeshivah approached me, having heard a recording of the talk. He debated with me, arguing that the yeshivos I had spoken of follow the teachings of the esteemed Rav Aharon Kotler zt”l, and that we should not alter the study schedule by adding a special mussar session.

Immediately, Hashem granted me a fitting response, and I asked him: “Can the way of life in our generation be compared to that of Rav Aharon’s time? Both within and outside the home, when we consider the clothing, vehicles, and all aspects of contemporary life—are we not as distant as the east is from the west from Rav Aharon’s extreme simplicity and modesty, which were well known?”

“If, indeed, we follow Rav Aharon’s teachings, how can we justify pursuing the vanities of this world, drawn like magnets to the winds of the street that prevail outside?”

“We must concede that our generation requires a response suited to its needs. In these times, when the world is filled with futile temptations and deceptions, it is essential to increase and strengthen our engagement in the study of mussar and pure fear of Heaven.”

A Jew constantly preoccupied with providing for his household once approached Rav Yisrael Salanter zt”l, with a question: since he found only half an hour each day to study, how should he best use that time? Should he focus on studying Gemara with Tosafos and commentaries or prioritize the study of halachah so he would know how to act properly?

Rav Yisrael firmly replied: “Neither in-depth study nor beki’us, neither halachah nor practical rulings. Study mussar! Through mussar, you will realize that you have far more time in your day than you think, time that is not properly utilized. By immersing yourself in sefarim of yirah and mussar, you will discover time for all other areas of Torah as well!”

נַעֲשֵׂוּ סִיג לְתוֹרָה אֲבֵיט א:א

«Create a Fence for the Torah» (Avos 1:1)

A well-known story is told in the Belz court. When the holy Rav Shmuel, zt”l, the eldest son of the holy Rav Yehoshua of Belz, zt”l, married the tzaddekes Sarah a”h, daughter of the holy Tzemach Tzedek of Vizhnitz zt”l, she was surprised after the seven days of sheva berachos to see her husband wearing a kalpik shtreimel, as was the custom in Belz. This type of shtreimel seemed very strange to her, as she had never seen such attire in her homeland, and it was not the custom her father’s house. She struggled greatly to accept this unfamiliar garment.

However, Rav Shmuel the tzaddik, naturally did not wish to alter the customs of his forefathers, and this caused his wife anguish and sorrow to the point of tears.

When her father-in-law, the holy Rebbe of Belz, heard about her distress, he called her to him and spoke gently and consolingly. Among his words, he said with charm and chein:

"We perceive the phenomenon of the 'decline of generations.' It is the way of the world that if the son deviates even slightly from the ways of his father, he risks descending even further; chas veshalom. If the father wears a kalpik, the son might wear a plain hat, the grandson may wear a feathered cap, and the next generation might adorn themselves with a straw hat. The generation after that may wear only a small kippah, which will shrink in size until the descendants go entirely bareheaded, Hashem yishmereinu." The Rebbe added: "I am not stating definitively that this progression must occur in this precise sequence, chas veshalom. But it is clear that if one changes his forefathers' ways, this can easily lead to severe spiritual decline, chas veshalom."

The holy Rebbe concluded: "Now, tell me, is it worth relinquishing the kalpik? The responsibility for future generations rests upon us!"

In earlier generations, when the printing press was a rarity and the costs of publishing were exorbitant, sefarim were far less common than today. Siddurim, Chumashim, and other holy texts were highly valued, and their owners devised ways to preserve them in pristine condition for many years, even for future generations.

One widespread practice was to include blank pages at the beginning and end of sefarim so that, if a page were torn or detached, it would likely be one of the blank pages, leaving the main body of the sefer intact.

Similarly, the well-known maggid, Rav Ben Zion Yadler zt"l, used this as a metaphor for the concept of safeguards and fences in Jewish law. Just as the blank pages protected the sefer, a person must establish extra precautions, stringencies, and distancing measures to prevent sin. Thus, even if one falters, chas veshalom, it will be in those safeguards rather than the core mitzvah itself.

יְהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם: א:א

"Let the Fear of Heaven Be Upon You" (Avos 1:3)

The holy Rebbe who authored Shomrei Emunim zt"l, once recounted: "A group of chassidim who sought the guidance of their holy Rebbe discussed avodas Hashem among themselves. They concluded that they had sufficiently worked on serving Hashem through yiras ha'onesh, the lower level of fear. They decided it was time to ascend to a higher level and serve God through yiras haromemus (awe of His majesty).

When they presented this resolution to their Rebbe, he dismissed it outright and said:

"Know with certainty that you have not even attained the proper level of fear of punishment! If one truly possesses fear of punishment, he would be afraid even to drink a drop of unnecessary water out of awe of the Creator. Therefore, do not delude yourselves into thinking you have reached the first level while rushing to ascend to the next."

My teacher and master, the Admor of Mishkanos HaRo'im, Rav Binyamin Rabinowitz zt"l, often said: "It is the way of the righteous, even after they have reached lofty levels of love for Hashem and awe of His majesty, to begin their daily service anew from the foundational levels—first instilling fear of punishment in their hearts before ascending step by step to awe of His majesty and love of His blessed Name." As the holy Zohar states (3:56), one does not attain the level of love until fear precedes it. A wondrous story was related to me by the sons of Rav Meir HaKohen, shlita, author of Tiv HaHalachah. He recalled an awe-inspiring event from his childhood days in the Talmud Torah Shomrei HaChomos in Yerushalayim.

One of the classes was taught by the renowned melamed, Rav Shmuel Weisenshtain zt"l, who deeply influenced his young talmidim with a profound yiras Shamayim.

On one occasion, the talmidim committed a wrongdoing. In his rebuke, Rav Shmuel instilled within his six- and seven-year-old pupils the principles of reward and punishment as vividly as if they were received at Mount Sinai.

At the end of his powerful derashah, the melamed instructed all the children to stand in line, announcing that they were now being taken to Gehinnom to receive their punishment because of their sin.

The children, overwhelmed with fear and trembling, began to cry, tears streaming from their eyes as their cries rose to the heavens. They wholeheartedly repented for their misdeeds. At that moment, Rav Shmuel said: "Since you have repented with a full heart, your sin has been forgiven. We will not go to Gehinnom, and you may return to your seat in peace."

For many years, this penetrating lesson and vivid experience left an indelible impression of yiras Shamayim on their young hearts.

This story is but one of countless examples from a generation that truly breathed and exemplified yiras Shamayim and how the fear of Heaven and the fear of sin were instilled into the hearts of the youth with purity and sincerity.

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יְהִי בֵיתְךָ בַּיּוֹם לְתַקְמִים: ט:א

«Let Your Home Be a Meeting Place for Sages» (Avos 1:4)

The holy Rav Nachman of Breslov zt"l, once recounted to his talmidim how he attained his elevated spiritual levels. As a young man living with his parents in the great and holy city of Mezhibuz, the location of the holy resting place of his grandfather, the holy Baal Shem Tov zt"l, his home often hosted the holy talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov when they gathered in Mezhibuz.

These talmidim would convene at his father's house, and, as was the custom among chassidim, they would engage in heartfelt, fiery conversations filled with enthusiasm and passion, extolling the greatness of their holy Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov. A stream of holy stories, awe-inspiring deeds, and upright practices flowed from their lips.

Rav Nachman testified that these discussions and holy tales kindled and inflamed his heart with love for God and the tzaddikim. He ascended to lofty spiritual levels and attained exalted states thanks to these gatherings.

Honoring Torah Scholars

A man once came before the holy Rav of Kotzk zt"l, to express his anguish and complaint: His daughter had reached marriageable age long ago, but for some reason, she refused to marry a talmid chacham, preferring instead to wed a simple tradesman who could provide financial security but was distant from Torah. Despite all efforts to reason with her, she turned a deaf ear.

The Kotzker, with his sharpness, replied: "Why do you only remember now? You are the cause of this yourself!"

In those days, yeshivos relied on a system of teg (days), whereby the talmidim were hosted by local townfolk, as the yeshivos did not provide meals. Each family would host a talmid on a set day of the week.

Some wise householders recognized the great merit of this arrangement and honored the yeshivah talmidim properly, treating them with respect as befits talmidei chachamim. However, others failed to appreciate the greatness of Torah learners. They merely fulfilled their obligation by offering the talmidim simple and cheap food, often leftovers from the family's meals.

"You, unfortunately, were among those who did not honor the talmidim adequately," the Rebbe said.

The Rebbe continued: "Instead of seating them at the head of the table and serving them a respectable meal, you demeaned them, giving them meager portions merely to fulfill your duty. It is no wonder, then, that your daughter learned this attitude from you. She grew up believing Torah and its learners are insignificant and unworthy of respect. How, then, can you now expect her to want to marry someone she views as unworthy?"