

SHABBAT PARSHAT NASO · 9 SIVAN 5770 · MAY 22, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 31

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE HIDDEN FACE

“May G-d illuminate His countenance...”(6:26)

Newspapers are depressing things. We read of tragedies and war and natural disaster. It’s easy to think, “Where’s G-d in all this?”

The answer is in this verse, *“I will surely have hidden My face.” (Devarim 2:18)*

G-d will never abandon us. Rather, we *feel* that He has forsaken us, because He has hidden His face. When G-d hides ‘His face’ it means that we cannot see Him controlling events. It seems to us that chaos rules.

Nothing happens that He does not decree. The decree for every event that has happened this year was sealed last Yom Kippur: “...who will live and who will die.”

He is always with us. And if we look carefully at events, even though we cannot see G-d’s ‘face’, we can at least discern His ‘back’, we can see the telltale footprints in the snow of history.

When we fail G-d so totally and we feel there is no way back to Him, we must remember that He is always there behind the mask of the world, waiting for us to return through prayer and *teshuva* (repentance).

“I will surely have hidden My face.”

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic “to surely do” something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase *“I will surely have hidden My face”* is *“Hide - I will have hidden My face.”* The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this ‘hiding’. There are two kinds of concealment: a concealment where you know that someone is there but you just can’t see them, and a concealment where you don’t even know if they are there at all. In other words the very fact of their

hiddenness is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding — where the very hiding is hidden.

When we are aware that G-d has hidden from us, He is not really concealed, because we realize that our hiding from Him has been reciprocated by His hiding from us. It’s like any relationship: when you act coldly towards your beloved, she doesn’t feel the confidence to be close to you anymore so she retreats from you. But if you honestly ask for forgiveness and promise her that you really want to be close, then she will take you back.

However, there’s a deeper hiding of the “face.” In this hiding, the hiding is itself hidden. Then we don’t see that we have a relationship with G-d at all. We think that this is the way the world is supposed to be. Then we are in big trouble because nothing awakens us to return to Him. We think to ourselves: “This is the way things are supposed to be? Isn’t it? I’m supposed to be single.”

One of the blessings that a *kohen* bestows on the Jewish People is that G-d should *“illuminate His countenance for you.”* Obviously, G-d does not have a countenance, a face, in the literal physical sense of its meaning. The meaning of this blessing is that we should see everything that happens in the world as directly coming from G-d; that there is no such thing as ‘natural causes;’ that everything in our lives is directly sent to us from Him. The blessing of the *kohen* is that we see “His face” in the world — that His presence is clear to all who choose to see it. Then we can shake ourselves from the bonds of our illusions, re-establish our relationship with Him, return to His Torah, and realize that nothing is real except Him.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for

inscribing G-d's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nisan* in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

ISRAEL Forever

JUST A DITTO?

This week's Torah portion is the longest one in the Torah because so much precious space is dedicated to reporting the gifts made to the Sanctuary by the heads of the tribes. What seems baffling is why the Torah repeated twelve times the nature of each gift although each of them gave the identical gift.

One of the reasons suggested by Ramban in his commentary for not simply mentioning the name of the donor and substituting a ditto for the gift is that although each gift was exactly the same as the others, the thought

behind it was different. Each tribe had its particular role in the destiny of the Jewish nation and its leader dedicated his gift with a thought that would provide the spiritual energy needed for fulfilling its mission.

We may take this point one step further and apply it to the destiny of nations. The Jewish People were not destined to be merely a ditto mark in the listing of independent states. Only by appreciating our special mission as G-d's chosen people will we secure Israel forever.

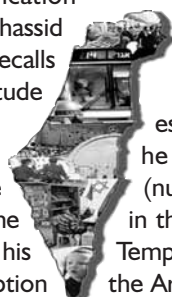
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

CHURVAT YEHUDA HACHASSID

The recent Arab protests against the dedication ceremony of the Churvat Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid Synagogue in the Old City of Yerushalayim recalls something written centuries ago about the Arab attitude to a Jewish presence in the Holy City.

Rabbi Gedalia was one of the Jews who accompanied Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid (not to be confused with the famed Torah giant by the same name who wrote *Sefer Hachassidim* centuries earlier) and his followers in 1701 on a mission "to bring the redemption



of the Jewish People closer through prayer, fasting, charity and mourning for the exile of the Holy Presence."

Taking note of the Arab resistance to Jews even establishing a synagogue so close to the Temple Mount, he called attention to the fact that the *gematria* (numerical equivalent of the letters) of the word *shudlim* in the prophet's description of "foxes walk there" on the Temple Mount is equal to the term *Hayeshmaeli* describing the Arab who assumes that only he has a right to be there.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is referred to in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the Name of G-d is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart." What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of "a full heart?"
18. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d bless you and guard you"?
19. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d lift up His countenance upon you"?
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of G-d is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "Amor."
18. 6:24 - "May G-d bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

TALMUDigest

SANHEDRIN 100 - 106

- Who is called an “*apikoros*”
- Miracles of the hereafter
- To which apocrypha does Rabbi Akiva refer
- The questionable wisdom of Ben Sira
- Wrong songs and occult cures
- The visit of the Sages to an ailing Rabbi Eliezer
- The rise of Yarovam and his sins
- Sages and their judgment of idolatrous kings
- The merits of two sinful kings
- The last kings of the Kingdom of Yehuda
- Kings and commoners who have no share in World to Come
- The Book of *Eicha* (Lamentations) and destruction of *Beit Hamikdash*
- Bil’am and the failed curses
- Envy of a son or disciple
- Doeg and Achitofel, the scholar sinners

ROYAL BUILDER OF A CITY

“How did Omri merit to be a king?” asked Rabbi Yochanan, and he answered his own question: “Because he added one city to Eretz Yisrael.”

Following the brief reign of Zimri who overthrew the sinful King Basha of the Kingdom of Israel, the general of the army, Omri, became the king. He is described as one who “did evil in the eyes of G-d worse than all that were before him (*Melachim I 16:25*). He nevertheless reigned for many years and Rabbi Yochanan’s statement appears to be an explanation of how he merited doing so, and is based on the previous passage.

“He (Omri) bought the hill Shomron from Shemer for

two talents of silver and built on the hill and called the name of the city Shomron after the name of the owner.” (Ibid. 16:24)

Maharsha, however, points out that the sequence of these two passages indicates that Omri became king before building Shomron. He therefore explains that Rabbi Yochanan’s observation was not why Omri deserved to become a king but rather why he merited that his son and grandson should succeed to his throne, a privilege denied to his predecessors who ruled over the Kingdom of Israel. It was the building of a great city in Eretz Yisrael that gave him this honor.

• *Sanhedrin 102b*

What the SAGES Say

“A person is capable of envying anyone except for his son or disciple.”

• *Rabbi Yossi bar Choni - Sanhedrin 105b*

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PRAYER POWER

From: Stacia

*Dear Rabbi,
I don't understand why I should pray, if G-d already knows whatever it is that I need. (I have prayed before in my life, spontaneously, and at times I have been answered positively. But my question is still, why?)*

Dear Stacia,

Imagine Adam, the first human, opening his eyes for the very first time. How do we picture it? He sees a beautiful lush garden, a panoply of color, a gorgeous array of flowers, vegetation, and trees. The first moment of man is a visual delight, a celebration of existence.

Wrong! Let's try again.

The Sages teach us that Adam opens his eyes and sees a bleak and barren world. No colors. No flowers, vegetation, or trees. He is surrounded with desolation, an earth forlorn in hues of brown and gray. Adam looks deeply into himself and understands that in order to survive he must nurture and build the world around him. This will ultimately justify the purpose of his creation. He looks at the miserable earth and recognizes his total inadequacy to fulfill his task. He feels a deep emptiness, an existential void; he has been created incomplete for his task.

Adam looks Heavenward and he does something that represents the most basic instinct of humanity, something that connects all of mankind in every culture and in every age. Even a thief who breaks into a house will do it in order not to get caught. It will be perfected by the *Avot* (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and purified by the *kohen gadol* (high priest) as he enters the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. He does something that connects him to the last tear shed for the coming of *mashiach*.

He prays.

Within moments, the rains come pouring down; earth's

goodness bursts forth and becomes the glorious Garden of Eden.

Man has prayed. God has answered.

The rest of history follows in much the same pattern. The word "Adam," man, has the same root as the word "adama," earth. Man, who is made from *adama*, justifies his existence by bringing out the potential of the *adama*. Thousands of years later, you and I are still "planting seeds" in the earth, justifying our own existence. How is this expressed in practice? We build a home, raise children, and concern ourselves with the improvement of society. As Jews, we study Torah and build the world through *chesed* (acts of kindness) by caring for those in need. And we, too, feel inadequate.

Why, though, did G-d create us with deficiencies which we must pray to fulfill?

The answer is astonishing. Although it seems totally counter-intuitive, all our problems are in fact nothing more than a means to have a relationship with G-d. Every challenge, pain, and moment of suffering, from the anguish of Adam when he opened his eyes for the very first time to the agony of the birth pains of the messianic era, they all exist so that man can connect to G-d. The act of prayer is not a solution to man's inadequacy; rather, man's inadequacy is an opportunity for prayer.

Our challenge is to internalize this crucial point. When life seems to be good we sometimes see prayer as a chore, part of our daily ritual which we squeeze in between brushing our teeth and breakfast. When life seems to be bad we rush to our prayer books to solve our problems. Yet all life's events are just roads to prayer. When the road is smooth, G-d is challenging us to acknowledge that we can take nothing for granted, that we are totally dependent on Him. And when the road is rocky, G-d is giving us the opportunity for extra intensity in prayer, to achieve an even higher level of closeness to Him.

• Source: *Rigshei Lev* by Rabbi Menachem Nissel

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IF IT PAYS TO PRAISE

Question: I am aware that it is very wrong to speak about others in a negative manner. What is the rule about speaking about someone in a positive way. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Although it would seem that there is nothing wrong with praising someone to others, our Talmudic sages ruled that even in regard to praise one must be careful.

One consideration is avoiding excessive praise since this inevitably invites a comment from a listener about the faults of that person.

Another consideration is ensuring that no one in your audience has negative feelings about the person you are praising, for then you will be guilty of enticing his enemy to counter your praise with criticism, in violation of the Torah comment to guard the tongue from speaking evil.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE EXTRA LETTER

The author of a scholarly Torah work brought his manuscript to the renowned Torah giant Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky in Bnei Brak for his review. In this work he repeatedly quoted things that he had heard from the Sage and wanted his approval that he had faithfully cited his words.

To his surprise Rabbi Kanievsky made no corrections in the text but did erase one letter of his own name wherever it was mentioned as the source. Dozens of times he eliminated an extra letter *yud* from his name.

The author wondered aloud why such a correction

was necessary since it did not affect the actual scholarly text. "The extra letter is a lie," replied the Sage, "and it cannot remain even if it will not lead to any misunderstanding of your text."

"But why bother making the correction dozens of times," asked the author, "when I could have made all the corrections with one press of a button on the computer?"

"A lie cannot be skipped over while I am reviewing," answered the Sage, "so I couldn't continue reading until I made each correction."

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