

PARSHAS NASO

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

The Torah in the previous parshah arranged the sanctity of His People in strata's of kedushah - Kohanim, Leviim and the tribes of Israel - each in their encampments according to their order. So now, in order that the encampment should be pure for the Shecinah to dwell in, we were commanded to remove all those who were impure or whose actions were metamei, and so impaired the kedushah. First there was the "expulsion of those with tzarat, those who had an zav-emission and those who were contaminated by contact with a human corpse- tumat met" (Devarim, 5:1-4). However, there is also the spiritual impurity caused by immoral actions; so the expulsion further included the thieves and the robbers but also women who sinned against their husbands - sotah (Devarim, 5: 5-31). [The reference to theft is a repetition of Vayikrah 5:20-26. In both, the Torah uses the same phrase me-ilah that is used in the crime of the misuse of Klei Hamikdash, making theft a crime against G-d as well. Furthermore we should note that whether a person was proven wrong by witnesses or whether he admitted on his own to have falsely misrepresented his behavior, he had to return the money or the goods. However, the sin offering and the 1/5th fine he was not allowed to bring in those cases where he was proven guilty by witnesses; after all in such cases he had not repented at all.]

After these came the level of the Nazir, those men or women who aspired to a higher level of sanctity than demanded of them and therefore took upon them-selves to turn aside, one of the meanings of lenatzar, from some of the enjoyment and pleasure in material things permitted to them. Nazir comes from crown and the Torah sees both the uncut hair and the kedushah of the Nazir as their crowning glory. They were on a higher level than Klal Yisrael in all respects and higher than the Leviim in regard to tumat met, drinking of wine and not cutting the hair. They were even higher than the Kohanim in the last two respects but also in that their spiritual level was not granted to them by reason of birth and descent but solely as a matter of free choice. The reason why the Nazir has to bring a chatat offering at the end of the period of Nezirut, is because he turned himself away from his higher level of sanctity and returned to that of ordinary people. [This explanation is contrary to many commentators who saw the oath of Nezirut, abstaining from the things that Hashem had permitted]. Some commentators teach that these 3 parshiot, Sotah, Nazir and Birkat Kohanim were given when Moshe erected the Mishkan on the 1st of Nissan as there (Shmot) we are told "And Aharon raised his hands over the people and blessed them". Now after these ascending levels of sanctity came the implementation of the blessing that we read about in Shmot, so that now we are told what the blessing was. However, I think that the words of the Torah are written

according to the sequence of events and in their true order There in Shmot there was a general blessing whereas here it came after the order of the camps surrounding the Mishkan had been ordered and after all camps had been cleared of the various types of tumah and the different levels of kedusha were shown. So it was appropriate for Hashem to command the Kohanim, not only to bless Israel but also to give them the exact text of that blessing. With the grandeur of Israel spread out according to their tribes each one in his correct encampment under the appropriate degel, the blessings of the Kohanim would protect them from the Ein Harah. This protection would come in the same way as, when faced with the same picture, Balak hired Bilam to invoke on them the Ein Harah. Each one of the 3 verses of the bracha is aimed at bring down the Name of Hashem to bestow blessings on Machaneh Yisrael in a different way.

Yevarechacha calls for the Name of G-d on the Degalim of Am Yisrael as their Guardian. Yaeir is for Machaneh Leviim as they are Israel's teachers, the grantors of Heavenly Wisdom that bestows knowledge, wisdom and âchen-Ata chonen leadam da'at- on Israel. The Kohanim are Macheneh Schinah so that their blessing yisa and shalom, is that Hashem should accept their prayers of Am Yisrael- yisa tefilah, and shalom that He grant them peace that there should cease strive and argument among them. Furthermore, Yevarechacha is regarding the welfare of the body, so that Hashem should grant them His bounty and material blessing without scarcity or shortages, when they come to fight with the 7 Nations and take possession of the Promised Land. This verse has only 2 words besides the Name of G-d, in order to grant them plenty and wealth as we need 2 forms of protection of our material wealth; sometimes wealth comes to ones benefit but sometimes to his detriment. The verse of Yisa is for the spiritual blessing of knowledge and wisdom, while that of Yisa is a prayer for the success and blessings of the combination of the two, material and spiritual and thereby Israel could come to the highest and most complete form of kedusha.

There are 3 types of berachot in the world. There is the brecha that Hashem grants to His creation, as "And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything" (Ber. 24:1) and then there are the blessings and praises that we, so to speak, pay to Hashem as, "And David blessed Hashem" (1 Chronicles, 29:10). Yet there are the blessings that people bestow on each other. These are not the great bounty and plenty that G-d grants to us, neither are they praise and glorification like those that we, as it were give to Hashem. These are rather prayers and requests that Hashem should show mercy and success on the one we are blessing, as "And Yitschak was old ... and he said to Eisav, ..that My soul may bless you " (Ber. 27:1-4. That is why the Kohanim were told " This is the way you shall bless Israel" (Bamidbar,6:23), so that they should know that this blessing was not from their own will or power, and not merely the hope for success, protection and wealth from one human to another, but rather the blessings that comes from Hashem and from Him alone " Let them place My Name upon the Children f Israel and I shall bless them".

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Dr. Tamari is a renowned economist, Jewish scholar, and founder of the Center For Business Ethics (www.besr.org) in Jerusalem.