

MORE PRECIOUS THAN PEARLS

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Naso

More Precious Than Pearls

Volume 20, No. 31

14 Sivan 5766

June 10, 2006

Sponsored by
Yitzchok and Barbie Lehmann Siegel
in memory of father Dr. Manfred R. Lehmann a"h
(R' Menashe Raphael ben He'Chaver R' Chaim and Fayga)
and brother, Jamie Lehmann a"h
(Chaim Menachem ben R' Menashe Raphael and Sarah)

Today's Learning:
Ta'anit 1:1-2
O.C. 565:4-6
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yoma 3
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Terumot 36

Our parashah opens: "Take a census of the sons of Gershon also." Why "also"? R' Avraham Saba z"l (Spain; 1440-1508) explains that Gershon was the oldest son of Levi, and his descendants had a claim to be counted before the descendants of Gershon's younger brother Kehat. Since the family of Kehat was already counted at the end of last week's parashah, our parashah says, "Take a census of the sons of Gershon also."

And why were the descendants of Kehat counted first? R' Saba explains that the Torah honors Kehat for his Torah knowledge, just as we read in Divrei Hayamim I (4:9), "And Yaavetz was honored more than his brothers." As the Gemara explains, Yaavetz was one of the greatest Torah scholars of the generation following Moshe Rabbeinu.

Similarly, Kehat's family was honored over the family of the firstborn Gershon because of the former's association with the Torah. On the verse (Mishlei 3:15), "It [the Torah] is more precious than peninim / pearls," the Midrash comments: "More precious than a firstborn" (a play on "lifnim" / "earlier," i.e., the firstborn, who is the early one). The family of Kehat carried the Ark which contained the luchot. Moreover, Kehat used to assemble crowds and teach them Torah. [Ed. note: The publisher of R' Saba's work notes that the source for this fact is unknown.] Kehat's name alludes to his assembling crowds, just as King Shlomo is called "Kohelet" because he also assembled large audiences; however, King Shlomo has an additional letter "lamed" ("Kohelet" vs. "Kehat") because the Mishnah (Avot ch.6) states that a king has 30 special attributes. (The gematria of "lamed" is 30.) (Tzror Hamor)

"The kohen shall make one as a sin-offering and one as an elevation-offering, and he shall provide him atonement for having sinned regarding the person." (6:11)

Why is a nazir / a person who because of a vow abstains from grape products, does not cut his hair and avoids corpse-impurity called a sinner? R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains:

Man was created with body and spirit, and perfection is attained by continually developing each one in harmony with the other. Our Sages teach that there is no human who never sins. However, the greatest sin is committed when one tries to ignore the fact that he is human. This is the sin that the nazir commits.

R' Kook adds: The correct approach (unlike the nazir's mistaken belief) is to realize that the fact that a person is susceptible to occasional sin does not detract from his perfection. This is because the foundation of perfection is not to be perfect (which is impossible, for every man must sin), but to truly desire to come as close to perfection as possible.

(Orot Ha'teshuvah ch.5)

"May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you . . ." (6:25)

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) comments (citing the Arizal): This verse reflects one of the two ways in which we feel Hashem's influence. One, alluded to here, is "hashpa'at panim" / "the influence of the face." The second, alluded to in Shmot (33:23), "You will see My back, but My face may not be seen," is "hashpa'at oref" / "the influence of the nape (or back)."

R' Soloveitchik continues: These two concepts may be understood through the following illustrations: A river in summertime flows in its bed, kept within its banks and its path. Water comes to those who have prepared for it by digging canals, building dams, pumping water, etc. In contrast, in the spring, when the snow melts and the river rises, the river flows and overflows lawlessly,

flooding and damaging fields and orchards on all sides.

The river in summertime is the symbol of hashpa'at panim--a flow that is measured and precise. This is alluded to in the verse (Yishayah 66:12), "Behold, I will incline to you like a river of peace." The wild river of springtime represents hashpa'at oref--an uncontrolled flow. Our Sages say that when we are deserving, rain will flow exactly where and when it is needed. This is hashpa'at panim. When we are not deserving, rain will fall in greater quantity, but with an offsetting loss of quality. For example, the rain will fall where it is not needed and when it is not wanted.

Another illustration: A reading lamp gives off a small amount of light, but focuses it where it is needed. This is hashpa'at panim-- quality over quantity. In contrast, an overhead bulb bathes the room in light, not discriminating between the person reading in one corner and the person sleeping in the other corner. That is hashpa'at oref-- quantity over quality.

The mahn in the desert is a perfect example of hashpa'at panim. It was given in precise measure, and no matter how hard one tried, he could not gather more than one omer's measure per member of his household. But having a hashpa'at panim relationship with G-d comes with a price. Specifically, it calls upon one to distinguish between the sacred and the profane. Thus, for example, the mahn came with the command (Shmot 16:25-26): "Today you will not find it in the field. You may gather it for six days, and on the seventh day it is Shabbat, it will not appear."

Our Sages say that the verse, "You will see My back, but My face may not be seen," was taught to Moshe Rabbeinu in response to Moshe's question: "Why do the righteous suffer?" R' Soloveitchik explains that the answer to this question lies in the difference between hashpa'at panim and hashpa'at oref. A righteous person receives goodness in a precise, targeted manner-quality over quantity. The wicked, on the other hand, experience unrestrained, overflowing goodness-quantity over quality.

(Festival of Freedom p.75)

"Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah" ("The Foundation and Root of Divine Service")

This year, we are presenting excerpts from the work Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah by R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (died 1794), whose primary theme is improving one's concentration in prayer. In Sha'ar Ha'ashmoret, ch. 8, the author writes:

Before donning tallit and tefilin, one should be very careful to recite the verse (Tehilim 90:17), "May the pleasantness of Hashem, our G-d, be upon us; our handiwork establish for us; may our handiwork establish it." Likewise, it is appropriate to say this verse before doing any mitzvah, and this will accomplish the purpose of standing one at the gate of proper kavanah / intention. The Zohar explains: What is meant by, "Our handiwork establish for us"? Cause our deeds to establish the proper effects in the worlds above even though we don't know how to evaluate Your will. "May our

handiwork establish it" means: Let our deeds reach whichever level of the heavens needs a tikkun.

R' Yitzchak ben R' Shmuel z"l ("Ri Ha'zaken")

R' Yitzchak was born in Ramerupt, France in approximately 1120. His father was the son of R' Simcha, author of Machzor Vitry, one of the earliest siddurim. His mother was a granddaughter of Rashi, and the sister of Rabbeinu Tam and Rashbam. Those two uncles of R' Yitzchak were his foremost teachers.

R' Yitzchak was one of the greatest of the Ba'alei Tosfot, the sages whose teachings are recorded in the Tosfot commentary to the Talmud. Only R' Yitzchak's uncle Rabbeinu Tam is quoted more frequently in that commentary. Regarding the genesis of R' Yitzchak's Talmud commentary, it is reported that he used to sit with sixty students before him, each of whom was studying a different Talmudic tractate. Between them, these students had the entire Talmud at their fingertips, and whenever R' Yitzchak would speak, they could challenge him from any tractate. When R' Yitzchak was questioned, he and his students would debate the matter until it had been fully resolved.

R' Yitzchak was known for his humility and his piety. He was known to pray for an exceedingly long time, and he used to observe Yom Kippur for two consecutive days (just as we observe all the other holidays for two days outside of Eretz Yisrael).

R' Yitzchak's students included the Mishnah commentator and Tosafist, R' Shimshon of Sens, and R' Yitzchak's own son, R' Elchanan. The latter was martyred in his father's lifetime, in 1184. R' Yitzchak died in Dampierre, France in approximately 1200.

Copyright © 2006 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and **Torah.org**.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. Did you know that the low cost of sponsorship - only \$18 - has not changed in seventeen years? Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.