

DOMESTIC HARMONY AND NATIONAL PEACE

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape #16, Mixed Seating at Weddings. Good Shabbos!

Mikdash Mordechai: Relationship between Domestic Harmony and National Peace

The discussion of the Sotah does not seem to fit into the basic topics of the opening chapters of the book of Bamidbar. They deal primarily with the topics of national import, primarily the size, roles and position of the respective Shevatim in the Jewish nation at this point in history. The Mikdash Mordechai explains that there is a very strong connection between the matter of the Sotah and the matter of the Shevatim: The linking factor is the concept of "Limishpechosam l'beis avosam" (according to their families, according to their father's homes). Here is a great nation, consisting of over 600,000 males of military age -- and yet the Torah keeps on stressing over and over again the idea of "L'mishpechosam l'beis avosam" -- that this nation and these tribes are all composed of family units. The idea is that Klal Yisroel as a whole is not stronger than those individual families. That's why the portion of Sotah is inserted here. The Torah is telling us that when the basic family unit breaks down, eventually Klal Yisroel as a great nation breaks down as well. If there isn't a secure family unit, then the result will be a suspected adulteress wife, and eventually the whole structure will collapse, since there is no L'mishpechosam l'beis avosam.

Using this concept, the Mikdash Mordechai then explains an interesting dispute we find in the Sifre. At the end of the portion of the Sotah and the Nazir we have Birkas Kohanim, which ends with the blessing "...v'yasem lecha Shalom" (...and He shall grant you Peace). There is a dispute as to what this is referring to; R. Chanina Segan haKohanim says this refers to peace in the home (Shalom Bayis). R. Natan says this refers to peace on a national level (Shalom Malchus Beis Dovid). This seems to be a strange dispute with totally disparate opinions as to the nature of the Priestly Blessing. The Mikdash Mordechai reconciles the two opinions and shows that the two sages are not arguing! Everyone agrees that the concern is for national peace -- peace for Klal Yisroel. But in order to have peace for Klal Yisroel, two types of peace are necessary; peace with enemies on the borders, and peace at a national level. However, in order to achieve national peace, peace in the individual home is also a

must. This huge, tremendous, Klal Yisroel is nothing more than a collection of family units and if the family unit is not secure, peace on a national level is not secure either.

Sforno on the Chillul Hashem involved in stealing from a convert

We have in this week's parsha a discussion of a situation in which a man or a woman commits a sin described by the Torah as "Limol ma'al ba'Hashem" (committing a trespass against the L-rd). Chaza"l tell us that this section of "Limol ma'all ba'Hashem" is referring to the crime of stealing from a convert. The Sforno on this section makes a very beautiful comment: Why if you steal from a convert is it considered to be a "sin against Hashem"? Look at this convert... he just went ahead and became a Jew, he wanted to envelope himself in the Divine Protection and now some Jew steals from him? What will his reaction be? Imagine the situation... A person is a gentile and he "sees the light" and decides to become a Ger Tzedek. He comes into a shul. He puts down his briefcase. He just finishes davening. He feels wonderful about being a Jew... and he turns around and someone walks off with his briefcase! This, says the Sforno, is not only a sin against another human being, this is a Chillul Hashem -- a sin against G-d. That's what the verse means by the term "Limol ma'al ba'Hashem".

Rabbi Weinberg elaborating on the concept of Chillul Hashem

Rabbi Weinberg spoke recently about the tremendous responsibility that we as religious Jews have in connection with this precept. There are some things, the Ramba"m tells us in Hilchos Yesodei haTorah, that are absolutely permissible. But if a person who is a "great individual" (adam gadol), renowned for his piety (mefursam b'Chassidus), people expect more from him. If such a person does something in this category, says the Ramba"m, that can be a Chillul Hashem. Something as innocent and innocuous as not paying the butcher back on time can be a Desecration of G-d's Name. An "Adom Gadol" has a different set of standards.

Rabbi Weinberg introduced a novel, but important concept: Nowadays, every single one of us has the law of an "Adom Gadol". Wherever we find ourselves -- be it in the office or in the super market or in traffic -- we are in the position of a "great individual renowned for their piety". That is how our neighbors who are not as religious or observant look at us. And if you do so much as cut off another person in traffic and the person sees that you have a beard or you're wearing a black hat or you have a bumper sticker proclaiming "Thank G-d Shabbos is Coming" and you advertise your Yiddishkeit, then how does that person look at you when you cut him off? That's today's equivalent of the Rambam's statement about not paying the butcher back on time.

When a person is in an office he may feel that it is religiously appropriate not to socialize with non-Jews, but there is a necessity to be civil. You have to say a "Good Morning" if you meet somebody by the water fountain or by the copy machine. It's not frumkeit (piety) and it's not da'as Torah

(sanctioned Torah practice) to be a hermit to the extent that people will murmur about you. At the eulogy of R. Yaakov Kaminetzsky, zt"l, one speaker related the following: There was a nun in Monsey, New York who complained about the way the Jewish population related to her: Everyone used to walk right past her... The "correct" people ignored her, and the "super correct" people spat. This nun then related that there was, however, one old Jew with a white beard that used to say "Good Morning" every single day. (That Jew was R. Yaakov.) That's Kiddush Hashem and "looking the other way" is Chillul Hashem. And that's how it has to be in an office. True, you don't have to socialize; you don't have to "go have a drink" afterwards but simple civility, simply being a "mentsh"... that's what the Ramba"m means when he says people have to say "How pleasant are his deeds". Every person has to look at himself nowadays like a "great person, renowned for his piety" because every one of the non-Jews and even other Jews look at you and say "That's an Orthodox Jew". It doesn't matter if you are or you aren't a Talmid Chochom, whether you do or you don't keep Chodosh, to them it's all the same -- you are an "Adam Gadol u'mefursam b'chassidus". Therefore, we always must strive for the standard of "How beautiful are his actions, how pleasant are his ways" and not to do that can result, b'avonoseinu harabim, chas v'sholom, in a Chillul Hashem. On the other hand, a person who is courteous and polite and will take a few extra minutes in traffic, and will be a little more pleasant at the checkout counter in the super market, it is about him that the Torah says "...you are My servant, through whom I will be glorified."

Glossary

Sotah -- suspected adulteress wife

Shevatim -- the Tribes of Israel

K'lal Yisroel -- The Jewish People

Nazir -- nazirite who abstains from wine, cutting hair, contact with dead

Birkas Kohanim -- the Priestly Blessing

Ger Tzedek -- A righteous convert

Chillul Hashem -- desecration of G-d's name

Kiddush Hashem -- sanctification of G-d's name

Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah -- Laws on the Fundamentals of Torah practice [from Rambam's Mishneh Torah].

Yiddishkeit -- Judaism

Goyim -- Gentiles

mentsch -- a well-mannered individual

Chodosh -- prohibition of eating from the "New" wheat crop

b'avonoteinu harabim, chas v'sholom -- due to our many sins, Heaven forbid

Personalities & Sources:

Sifre -- Halahic Midrash on the Books of Bamidbar & Devorim

Ramba"m -- Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), one of leading Torah scholars and codifiers of the Middle Ages, Spain and North Africa. Author of Mishneh Torah, code of Jewish law.

Rav Yakov Weinberg -- present Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Israel Rabbinical College, Baltimore.

Rav Yakov Kaminetzky -- (1891-1986) Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, New York.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#) Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#)

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#14). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: #14 - The Prohibition of Yichud. The other halachic portions for Parshas Naso from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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