

THE DILEMMA OF NISANEL BEN TZUAR

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: # 148, Sotah: The Case of the Unfaithful Wife. Good Shabbos!

>The Dilemma of Nisanel ben Tzuar

Parshas Naso is the longest parsha in the Torah, containing 176 verses. (It is interesting to note that the longest tractate in Talmud -- Bava Basra -- also has 176 blatt (folios, two-sided pages), and the longest chapter in Tanach, the Bible -- Tehillim (Psalms) 119 -- also has 176 verses.) When I was a young child, I remember feeling bad for the Bar Mitzvah boy who had to read Parshas Naso. The truth of the matter is that in terms of being a Ba'al Koreh [(Public) Torah reader], Parshas Naso is a rather simple parsha, because a large part of it is basically repetition.

The end of the Parsha contains the recitation of the various sacrifices offered by the Princes of each of the Tribes on consecutive days in honor of the dedication of the Mishkan. The Torah tells us the exact offering of every single Prince. However, as it turns out, every Prince brought exactly the same offering. For 12 Princes (Nesiim), one after the other, the Torah tells us verbatim the same thing. So the Bar Mitzvah boy doesn't have to learn so many new pesukim, after all.

There is a fascinating Medrash on this portion of the Nesiim. The Medrash relates that the Nasi from Yehudah, which was the first tribe to make an offering, had it easy. He could offer whatever he desired. The second Nasi -- Nesanel ben Tzuar of the Tribe of Yissachar -- was faced with a dilemma: what was he going to bring?

We can compare this dilemma to the following situation: There will be 12 Bar Mitzvahs in shul, one week after the other. The first Bar Mitzvah serves a fruit cup, a quarter of a chicken, a piece of kugle, some carrots, and some chocolate cake for desert. That is Bar Mitzvah -- Week 1.

The next week is Bar Mitzvah, Week 2. What does he serve?

"I should serve the same chicken, the same kugle? That makes no sense! I'm not an imitator. That is not me. I'll do it differently. I'll serve chicken cutlets and broccoli..." The person will plan how to make

each course a little different, a little better.

The poor third guy has already seen the chicken and the chicken cutlets. What can he do? He obviously must serve beef!

We can readily understand that by the time we get to Bar Mitzvah number 12, he really needs to outdo himself...

The Medrash says that this is what went through the mind of Nesanel ben Tzuar: If I try to do different than the Tribe of Yehudah, if I try to 'one-up' Nachshon ben Aminadav, then the Nasi after me and the Nasi after him will face a spiral of escalating sacrifices, escalating costs, until day 12. Imagine what the Nasi will have to bring by then!

Nesanel ben Tzuar reasoned as follows: We know our own nature. Everyone will argue that his offering was better. This will lead to Lashon Hara and hatred and jealousy. We know our nature.

So, Nesanel ben Tzuar did a tremendous thing. He brought exactly the same offering. He set the tone -- everyone is the same.

What was G-d's response? The Medrash says an unbelievable thing...

There is an inviolate rule that a Public Offering can override Shabbos prohibitions, but a Private Offering cannot. No individual offering is ever brought on the Sabbath. If that is true, the sequence of offerings of the Princes should have been suspended on Shabbos, since they were Private Offerings. In this case, however, G-d allowed the offering to be brought even on Shabbos because it was like a Public Offering.

Since all of the offerings were brought exactly like one another to maintain the sense of community (Tzibur), peace, and unity -- this was a Korban Yachid (Private Offering) that was infused with the spirit of a Korban Tzibur (Public Offering). It was a Korban Yachid that was brought to keep the Tzibur intact. G-d said -- as it were -- "For Me, this is considered a Communal Offering".

There is a great ethical lesson here. This teaches us the importance of communal unity and the importance of communal peace. We see what G-d's response is to one who does things to promote such peace, unity, and harmony. A person that keeps a Tzibur together is one who brings merit to the masses in a most distinguished fashion and who merits many wonderful things for himself as well.

Glossary

blatt -- a (two-sided) folio of the Talmud

Tanach -- Bible (Acronym for Torah, Neviim, Ketuvim)

Ba'al Koreh -- (Public) Torah reader

Mishkan -- Tabernacle

pesukim -- verses (of the Bible)

Lashon Hara -- evil (slandorous) language

Machlokes -- arguments

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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 (#148). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Sotah: The Case of the Unfaithful Wife. The other halachic portions for Naso from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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