

A REDUNDANT WORD

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 195, Birchas Kohanim. Good Shabbos!

This week's "RavFrاند" shiur is dedicated by the Chait family l'iluy nishmas (in memory of) Russie Chait, Rus Elisheva bas HaRav Chaim Ozer, on the occasion of her 2nd Yartzheit, 10 Sivan.

Naso - A Redundant Word Introduces the Sotah Portion

In this week's parsha, we learn about a Sotah - a woman who is suspected by her husband of unfaithfulness. The Torah prescribes a special mixture, "Sotah water" to ascertain whether or not the suspicion is correct. As a result of drinking this mixture, the woman either dies or is vindicated and blessed.

The pasuk [verse] begins with the words "Ish ish..." ["Any man," or literally "Man, man"] "whose wife goes astray..." [Bamidbar 5:12]. It is peculiar that the Torah employs this style of "Ish ish" to connote the idea of "any man". The normal way to convey that message is by using the term "ish" [man] only one time.

I saw an interesting comment from Rav Moshe Chafetz. Rav Chafetz explains that the Torah is using the extra "ish" to tell us that sometimes the situation of the suspected wife results from the husband being too much of an "ish". The husband asserts himself too much -- the "ish" is too demanding. The man is too interested in the "ish" part of the marriage and not enough in the "isha" [woman, wife] part of the marriage.

If I had to pick one word to describe the quality or fault upon which most marital problems begin, I would have to pick the word "selfishness". And the word that I would pick to describe the key to a successful marriage is "selflessness".

Most problems, whether money problems or in-law problems -- all the problems that we know which contribute to unhappy marriages -- usually stem from the fact that people are too insistent on themselves and for themselves. They are not compromising enough. They are not willing to give in

enough.

Sometimes the problem is the husband asserting too much of the "ish" part of the marriage, and sometimes the problem is the wife asserting too much of the "isha" part of the marriage. Marriages have problems when one of the partners places too much of an emphasis on him or herself. When marriages have such problems, Sotah situations can develop.

Rash"i cites a famous Chazal, which asks: Why does the parsha of Sotah follow immediately after that of one who neglects to bring the proper gifts of Priesthood to the Kohain? The answer given is that if one does not take care of the Kohain by providing the proper gifts, one day he will find himself needing the Kohain to take care of his wife's "Sotah water".

The Torah Temimah explains the connection between the two. The reason why a person does not give the proper items to the Kohain is because he is stingy, cheap, and selfish. Those are also reasons that can cause Sotah problems -- a stingy and selfish individual will also not have a giving and selfless relationship with his wife. A lack of generosity of spirit and refusal to compromise in marriage is bound to lead to Sotah situations.

Yaakov's Connection to the Sheep

The majority of the parsha is devoted to the sacrifices that were brought by the Princes of the Tribes. Each Nasi [Prince] brought a single young bull (par echad), a single ram (ayil echad) and a single sheep (keves echad).

Rash"i explains that the young bull represents Avraham, as it says "He brought a young bull" [Bereishis 18:7]; the Ayil represents the ram of Yitzchok, as it says "And he took the ram" [Bereishis 22:13]; and the Keves represents Yaakov, corresponding to the verse "And Yaakov separated the sheep" [Bereishis 30:40].

The Torah references each of the sacrifices to the essence of one of the Avos [Patriarchs]. What is the essence of Avrohom? Avrohom is the master of Chessed [kindness]. Therefore, by mentioning a young bull, the Medrash marshals an example of Avrohom's kindness - when Avrohom ran to the herd to bring a young bull to feed the Angels. The essence of Yitzchok is Gevurah [spiritual strength]. The Torah portrays this attribute of Yitzchak's Awe and Fear of G-d through the Akaidas Yitschak - the Binding of Isaac. Therefore, the ram alludes to Yitschak.

We are able to understand that the first two references epitomize Avrohom and Yitzchak. However, how does the incident with Lavan's sheep represent the essence of Yaakov? Why does the Medrash use that pasuk?

Rav Bergman, in his sefer [book] Sha'arei Orah, points out that the reason why Yaakov separated the sheep was to insure that Lavan would not have the slightest suspicion that Yaakov was trying to cheat.

Yaakov wanted all of his sheep to be one kind and all of Lavan's sheep to be another kind, so that Lavan would not be able to claim that Yaakov took any of his sheep. Yaakov made great efforts, not only to avoid actual theft, but also to avoid even the slightest suspicion of theft. This illustrates Yaakov's essence: Give Truth to Yaakov [Michah 7:20]. That one sheep (keves echad) symbolizes the attribute of Yaakov: honesty above reproach.

It is interesting that in the Yotzros of Hoshannah Rabbah, the author of the poem "Ta'aneh Emunim" (Answer the Faithful) describes Yaakov as "the one who peeled rods at the troughs of water". Is this is all that the author can think of to tell us about Yaakov? What about telling us about Yaakov learning in the Yeshivah of Shem and Ever for 14 years? What about fathering the 12 Tribes?

Here too, the answer is the same. Yaakov's honesty and truth is his essence. Even when dealing with a crook like Lavan, Yaakov goes out of his way to be faithful in his dealings. Therefore, the sheep and the peeled rods of Yaakov do represent Yaakov's essence - that of Emes - Truth.

Glossary

Kohain -- Priest

Chessed -- kindness

Gevurah -- (Spiritual) Strength

Yotzros -- Liturgical poems

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