

DISAPPOINTMENT IS MORE THAN AN OFFERING

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 242, Military Service and Potential Halachic Problems. Good Shabbos!

Aharon, Your Disappointment Is Greater Than Their Offerings

In the beginning of the Parsha, the Torah teaches the command to light the Menorah in the Mishkan [Tabernacle]. Rashi comments "Why does the section of the Menorah appear immediately after the section of the offerings of the Princes? Because when Aharon saw that there was no role for him or his Tribe in the dedication of the Mishkan, he became depressed. G-d told him 'By your life, your role is greater than theirs -- for you set up and light the candles.'"

The Ramban questions how this specific 'consolation prize' compensates Aharon for his disappointment. In a very famous comment, the Ramban answers that G-d's response hints at the miracle of Chanukah, in which Aharon's descendants would play a major role.

The Shemen HaTov answers differently. He says that within the mitzvah of the Menorah lies the lesson to why Aharon should not have felt badly in the first place. When the Sages say that Aharon was told "Your role is greater than their role," they were not referring to any specific service that Aaron was to perform. Rather, the reference is to his state of depression at not having a role in the dedication, along with the princes. The fact that a person can become depressed or upset by virtue of not being able to participate in a mitzvah, is itself more impressive to G-d than if the person had in fact actually done the mitzvah! The emotion of desire and longing to participate, without being allowed to, is itself very significant to G-d. The reason G-d rewards Aharon with the mitzvah of Menorah is because the Menorah symbolizes this phenomenon.

Why do we have a mitzvah of lighting the Menorah? The Medrash asks, "Does G-d need the Menorah's light? G-d is the Light of the world!" What then is the purpose of the Menorah? It is akin to the cliché "It's the thought that counts!". True, G-d doesn't NEED the light, but what he wants from us is for us to go through the action of lighting the Menorah, AS IF G-d needed the light. Basically, it is not the light that G-d wants; it is the act of devotion and the feelings that lighting the Menorah

demonstrate.

Of course, feelings without actions are meaningless as well. But in the ultimate and final analysis, G-d wants feelings that are represented by actions. This is what Chazal are telling us here. G-d rewarded Aharon with the Mitzvah of the Menorah because the Menorah is symbolic of G-d's reaction to Aharon's feelings. "You are depressed because you can't fulfill a mitzvah? Aharon, you don't know how much that means to me. In reward and recognition of that, I am giving you the Menorah -- which represents the essence of this concept."

Like a Nursing Mother Carries a Baby

We are told that the Jewish people complained about the Manna, and asked for meat. Moshe became frustrated "Why, oh G-d, have You done evil with your servant... to place the burden of this nation upon me?" [Bamidbar 11:11]. It is very difficult to be the leader of the Jewish people and to carry them "...as the nursing mother carries the suckling baby..." [Ibid. 11:12].

The Talmud derives a special lesson from the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu sets "the nursing mother who carries the suckling" as the standard for Jewish leadership. This is an exhortation to the judge and leader of the Jewish people that they must endure the people [Sanhedrin 8a]. The leader must be able to endure all the crazy demands and expectations that are dished out to people in positions of leadership.

Any person who has ever raised an infant knows of the following, all too common, scenario: a little baby is dressed in his or her most beautiful outfit, sitting on the lap of his or her mother (herself wearing a beautiful dress), who is cuddling and enjoying time with her infant. All of a sudden, the baby does what babies do... but the diaper does not perform as advertised.

What does the mother do? Yes, she is upset. But does she take the baby, chastise it, and throw the baby down, saying "how could you do this to me?!"

Of course not! Any mother understands that a baby is a baby, and has limited intelligence. The baby is not capable of realizing what he or she is doing. What does the mother do? She takes the baby, washes off the baby, changes the baby, changes her own dress, and goes on ... all with a smile on her face.

That is the image of "as a nursing mother carrying a baby", which is set by Chazal, our Sages, as the standard for Jewish leaders. One has to be able to endure the people, and to accept even the "unacceptable" from them. One has to sometimes look at the people and excuse them with the thought "alas, they have no intelligence."

They are babies. But therefore, what? Should I throw them down? Should I throw in the towel? Whether we are talking rabbinic leadership, or even lay positions, to be a leader is to be the nursing mother of the infant who soils her.

The Hebrew word for congregation "Tzibbur" (Tzadee, Beis, vov, Reish) can be viewed as an acronym for Tzaddikim, Beinonim, u'Reshaim (the righteous, the in-between, and the wicked). In dealing with the congregation, one will encounter some wonderful people -- Tzaddikim. Then one finds the many who are okay, fine people, -- the "in-betweens". But included in every congregation are the wicked. If not truly wicked, at least those who sometimes act like wicked people.

One is tempted to ask, "What do I need this for?" That is why our Sages tell us that a leader is warned that he has to be prepared to 'endure' the congregation. Whenever we ask ourselves "How far does it go?", "To what extent?", we should remember the example of the baby soiling its mother's dress. That is how far it goes.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#242). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Military Service and Potential Halachic Problems. The other halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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