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A Definition of Anivut

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered June 7, 1963)

Our Sidra of this morning introduces us, rather casually and incidentally, to one of the most important and highly celebrated virtues in the arsenal of religion, that of anivut. We read in today's portion, ve'ha-ish Mosheh anav me'od mi-kol ha-adam asher al p'nei ha-adamah, "and the man Moses was the most humble, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." Whatever may be the particular translation of the Hebrew word anav, the idea that is usually imparted is that anivut is humility, a feeling by the individual that he lacks inner worth, an appreciation that he amounts to very little. Indeed, the author of Mesilat Yesharim, one of the most renowned works on Jewish ethics in all our literature, identifies the quality of anivut with shiflut- the feeling of inner lowliness and inferiority. According to this definition, then, the Torah wants to teach each of us to see himself in a broader perspective, to recognize that all his achievements are very trivial, his attainments mere boastfulness, his prestige a silly exaggeration! If Moses was an anav, if he was humble and able to deprecate himself, how much more so we lesser mortals.

However, can this be the real definition of this widely heralded quality of anivut?

We know of Moses as the adon ha-neviim, the chief of all the prophets of all times, the man who spoke with G-d "face to face." Do the words ve'ha-ish Mosheh anav me'od mean that Moses himself did not realize this? Does the anivut of Moses imply that he had a blind spot, that he failed to recognize what any school child knows? Does a Caruso have to consider himself nothing more than a choir boy, and an Einstein merely an advanced bookkeeper, in order to qualify for anivut? In order to be an anav, must one be either untruthful or genuinely inferior?

To a very great extent, modern psychology is concerned

with the problem of inferiority. Deep down, people usually have a most unflattering appraisal of themselves. Many are the problems which bring them to psychologists and psychiatrists; yet all so often the underlying issue is the lack of self-worth. Are we, therefore, to accept the Jewish ethical prescription of anivut as an invitation to acquire an inferiority complex?

In addition, the definition of anivut as self-deprecation and humility does not fit into the context of today's Sidra. The identification by the Torah of Moses as an anav is given to us as part of the story in which we learn of Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, speaking ill of Moses behind his back. They criticize him harshly because of some domestic conduct in the personal life of Moses. They are wrong, and they are punished by the Almighty. But what has all this to do with the humility of Moses? The substance of their criticism, namely, the domestic relations of Moses, is as unrelated to Moses' humility as it is to his artistic talents or his leadership ability.

Furthermore, the Talmud relates an exchange that is all but meaningless if we assume that anivut means humility. The Talmud (end of Sotah) tells us that mi-she'met Rabbi batlah anavah, when Rabbi Judah the Prince died, the quality of anivut disappeared with him. When this was stated, the famous Rabbi Joseph disagreed. He said, lo titnei anavah, d'ika anna- "how can you say that when Rabbi Judah died anivut vanished, do you not know that I am still here?" I am an anav! Now, if anivut really means humility, does this make sense? Can one boast of his humility and still remain humble? Is it not of the essence of humility that one should not consider that he possesses this virtue in himself?

It is for these reasons, and several more, that the famous head of the Yeshiva of Volozhin, popularly known as

the Netziv, offers us another definition of anivut (in his Haamak Davar) which, I believe, is the correct one. I would say that the definition of the Netziv, in English, is not humility, but meekness. It refers not to self-deprecation but self-restraint. It involves not an untruthful lack of appreciation of one's self and one's attainments, but rather a lack of arrogance and a lack of insistence upon kavod. To be an anav means to recognize your true worth, but not to impose the consequences upon your friends and neighbors. It means to appreciate your own talents, neither over-emphasizing nor under-selling them, but at the same time refraining from making others aware of your splendid virtues at all times. Anivut means not to demand that people bow and scrape before you because of your talents, abilities, and achievements. Anivut means to recognize your gifts as just that--gifts granted to you by a merciful G-d, and which possibly you did not deserve. Anivut means not to assume that because you have more competence or greater endowments than others that you thereby become more precious an individual and human being. Anivut means a soft answer to a harsh challenge; silence in the face of abuse; graciousness when receiving honor; dignity in response to humiliation; restraint in the presence of provocation; forbearance and a quiet calm when confronted with calumny and carping criticism.

With this new definition by the Netziv, the statement of Rabbi Joseph becomes comprehensible. When he was told that with the death of Rabbi Judah the Prince there was no more anivut or meekness left in the world, he replied with remarkable candor and truthfulness: you must be mistaken, lo titnei anavah, d'ika anna, because I too am meek. There is no boastfulness here--simply a fact of life. Some people are meek, some are not. If a man says "I am humble," then obviously he is not humble; but if a man says "I am meek," he may very well be just that. In fact, the Talmud tells us that Rabbi Joseph was at least the equal in scholarship of his colleague, Rabbah, but that when the question arose who would head the great Academy in Babylon, Rabbi Joseph deferred to Rabbah. And furthermore, kol shanei di-malakh Rabbah, Rav Yosef afilu umna le'veiteih lo kara- all the years that Rabbah was Chief of the Academy, Rabbi Joseph conducted himself in utter simplicity, to the point where he did all his household duties himself and did not invite any artisan or laborer, and physician or barber, to come to his house. He refused to allow himself the least convenience which might make it

appear as if he were usurping the dignity of the office and station occupied by his colleague Rabbah. This is, indeed, the quality of meekness-or anivut!

And this meekness was the outstanding characteristic of Moses as revealed in the context of the story related in today's Sidra. Here were Aaron and Miriam, both by all means lesser individuals than Moses, who derived so much of their own greatness from their brother, and yet they were ungrateful and captious, and meddled in Moses' personal life. A normal human being, even a very ethical one, would have responded sharply and quickly. He would have confronted them with their libelous statement, or shaped some sharp rejoinder to them, or at the very least cast upon them a glance of annoyance and irritation. But- ve'ha-ish Mosheh anav me'od mi-kol ha-adam asher al p'nei ha-adamah, the man Moses was the most meek, more so than any man on the face of the earth. Although aware of his spiritual achievements, of his role of leader of his people, even of his historical significance for all generations, he entertained no feeling of hurt sensitivity, of injured kavod. There was in his character no admixture of pride, or arrogance, of harshness, of hyper-sensitivity. He had an utter lack of gall and contentiousness. He was, indeed, an anav, more so than other individual on the face of the earth. And he was able to write those very words without self-consciousness! Hence he did not react at all to the remarks of his brother and sister. Therefore, God said: if Moses is such an anav that he does not defend himself against this offense, I will act for him!

The quality of anivut, as it has been defined by the Netziv, is thus one of the loveliest characteristics to which we can aspire. One need not nourish inferiority feelings in order to be an anav. Indeed, the greater one is and one knows one's self to be, the greater his capacity for anivut or meekness. It is the person who pouts arrogantly and reacts sharply and pointedly when his ego is touched, who usually reveals thereby feeling of inferiority and worthlessness, deep shiflut. The man who feels himself secure and who recognizes his achievements as real, can afford to be meek, to be an anav.

For it is this combination of qualities-inner greatness and outer meekness- that we learn from none other than God Himself. The Talmud put it this way: kol makom she'ata motzei gedulato shel ha-Kadosh barukh Hu, sham ata motzei anvetanuto. Wherever you find mentioned the gedulah or greatness of God, there also you will find

mentioned His anivut. Thus, for instance, where we are told that G-d is mighty and awesome, immortal and transcendent, there too we learn that G-d is close to the widow and the orphan, the stranger and the sick, all those in distress, those overlooked, ignored, and alienated from the society of the complacent. G-d's anivut certainly does not mean His humility or self-deprecation! It does mean His softness, gentleness, kindness--His meekness!

Here, then, is a teaching of Judaism which can ill afford to do without. When we deal with husband or wife, with neighbor or friend, with children or students, with subordinates or employees--we must remember that the harsh word reveals our lack of security, and the impatient rejoinder shows up our lack of self-appreciation and self-respect. It is only when we will have achieved real gedulah,

true inner worth and greatness, that we shall learn that remarkable, sterling quality of anivut or meekness.

Let us leave the synagogue this morning aware of that mutual, reciprocal relationship between greatness and meekness. If we have gedulah, let us proceed to prove it by developing anivut. And if we doubt whether we really possess gedulah, then let us begin to acquire it by emulating the greatest of all mortals, Moses, and the immortal Almighty Himself, and practice anivut in all our human relations. If this anivut does not succeed at once in making us truly great, it at least will offer us the dividends of a better character, a happier life, more relaxed social relations, and the first step on the ladder of Jewish nobility of character.

Read more at www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage.

Keep It Short

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

At the end of this week's parsha, we learn of the conversation that Aharon and Miriam had about Moshe, in which they criticized him for acting inappropriately in regard to his wife, saying that his status as a prophet did not give him license to act as he did. After all, they said, Moshe is not the only one to whom God spoke. Moshe was in the tent at the time and able to hear what they said. However, he did not respond. The Torah itself then notes that Moshe was the most humble man on earth. At that point, God Himself tells all three of them to leave the tent, and then calls on Aharon and Miriam to step forward to hear His message. He then proceeds to defend Moshe, relating his praises and saying that, because of Moshe's unique level of prophecy, different rules applied to him, and he always had to be ready to receive a communication from God. That is why he was justified to act as he did in regard to his wife. Why did God separate Aharon and Miriam from Moshe before He spoke about him? Rashi cites a midrash which says that this is because one is not supposed to speak all of the praises of a person in his presence, but only when he is not present. As an aside, we may add the comment of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, that, in the presence of a person, one is not only permitted to mention some of his praises, but actually is supposed to do so, in order to encourage him to continue in his admirable path. In any case, God wished to relate all of Moshe's praise to Aharon and Miriam, and, therefore,

told them to remove themselves from his presence. However, when one looks at the verses which record what God actually said to Aharon and Miriam, we do not find that He enumerated all of the special qualities of Moshe. He did not even tell them that Moshe was exceedingly humble, as the Torah testified about him. Rather, he only said that his level of prophecy was greater than theirs, and described what that level of prophecy entailed. Why is this considered to be 'all of the praises of Moshe'?

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus, zt"l, in his Tiferes Torah to parshas Beha'aloscha, explains that Moshe's essence was his desire to be close to God. This kind of desire was best expressed by King Dovid, when he said, As for me, the closeness of God is good" (Tehillim 73:28). Rabbi Pincus also cites the remarks of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in his Mesilas Yeshorim, chapter one, that closeness to God is the only real good in the world, and whatever else man strives for in this world is, in an ultimate sense, empty and meaningless. In his Derech HaShem, Rabbi Luzzatto further explains this idea, saying that God is perfect, and one who strives to be close to Him is, therefore, striving for perfection, to the extent that it is attainable for a human being. Thus, Moshe's quest for this kind of closeness was really an expression of his desire for human perfection, and, in effect, constituted the greatest praise that God could give him.

After God rebuked Aharon and Miriam for speaking

against Moshe, He punished Miriam by afflicting her with tzora'as. Moshe then prays for her, uttering the shortest prayer recorded in the Torah, consisting of six Hebrew words, which translate as, "Please God, cure her now" (Bamidbar 12:13). Rabbi Pincus points out that this translation is based on Targum Onkeles. In the Hebrew, Rabbi Pincus explains, the word 'na' appears twice. The first time it appears, after the word for 'God,' It means 'please,' but the second time it appears, between the words 'refah' - cure - and 'la' - her - it means 'now.' However, according to the Targum attributed (wrongfully) to Yonasan ben Uziel, the second time the word appears, it also means please. Thus, according to this translation, the verse should be translated, "Please God, please cure her." Why did Moshe say 'please' twice? Rabbi Pincus explains that for someone who truly seeks closeness to God, every time he prays, even if his prayer is a request for a specific item, his main purpose in praying is to achieve closeness to God. Thus, when Moshe began his prayer, he first asked for closeness to God, and then requested that God, who was so close to Him, heal Miriam of her tzora'as. Rabbi Binyomin Yudin, in a discussion we had about Rabbi Pincus' remarks, suggested that Moshe may also have been

asking that God restore His closeness to Miriam, as well, by curing her of her tzora'as. If so, this would have come out of an awareness that closeness to God is the ultimate good, and his request for Miriam's cure was a means to help her recover that ultimate good which she had lost as a result of the punishment she had received for her sin.

Based on Rabbi Pincus' explanation of Moshe's prayer for Miriam, we can say that there is an added dimension to the Torah's recording of Miriam's punishment and Moshe's prayer for her recovery. At first blush, this incident would appear to be the nothing more than a recording of Miriam's punishment and the way in which it was eventually ended. On another level, we can see it as a demonstration of Moshe's humility, disregarding the fact that Miriam had spoken badly about him, and praying for her recovery. Following Rabbi Pincus' approach, however, there is yet another level of meaning which we can discern. The entire incident, mentioned directly after God's praise of Moshe for being close to God, is a demonstration of Moshe's understanding of the importance of such closeness, and, therefore, a proof to what God told Aharon and Miriam about him.

The Tekiya Before and After

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted from a shiur given at the Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim)

In this week's Parsha, we have the parsha of the chatzotzros. And I think this helps us learn a peshat in Rosh Hashanah. Sometimes, the Torah commands us to blow a tekiya with these chatzotzros, and sometimes it requires us to blow a teru'a. One example that is given here is *ve-chi tavo'u milchama ba-artzechem. . .ve-harei'osem ba-chatzotzros*. When you are in trouble, and you are in some tzara, you must daven to Hashem. This is the makor, according to Rambam, of the mitzvah of ta'anis. And the pasuk says: *U-ve-yom simchas'chem u-ve-moadeichem u-ve-roshei chodsheichem u-tekatem ba-chatzotzros*. On your happy days, when you celebrate with Hashem and bring korbanos in the Beis Hamikdash, you blow a tekiya with the chatzotzros. It seems that a tekiya is related to happiness and celebration, while a teru'a is associated with trouble—when you are crying out. That's why a teru'a is a yevava, which we learn from the mother of Sisra. And this corresponds to the words of Ramban that tekiya is related to rachamim and teru'a is connected to midas

ha-din. From the pshuto shel mikra it seems that a tekiya represents the happiness, the simcha, the Mo'ed, and the hoda'a to Hashem in cheerful times. And teru'a expresses the tzara, when you are cry out to Hashem in times of trouble. Therefore, it's very fascinating what we do on Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is a day of teru'a—*yom teru'a yihye lachem*. Why? Because it's Yom Ha-din, and we are in trouble. But according to Torah Sheba'al Peh, on Rosh Hashanah, even though Torah calls it Yom Teru'a, we don't just blow teru'a. We darshen that we need a *tekiya le-faneca* and a *tekiya le-achareha*. A teru'a needs to be in the middle, in the context of tekiyos. Why is that? The teru'a is crying out to Hashem when we are in trouble. We need to feel vulnerable when sifrei chayim and sifrei meisim are open in front of Hashem. It's designed for you to feel all the dangers of the world. And whatever terrible tzaros we have, we need to cry out to Hashem. We don't cry out to Hashem stam. We do so in a certain context. We know that Hashem's big plan in history is a *tekiya le-faneca*

u-le-achareha. Everything Hashem does is for the good. Sometimes you must pass through difficulties and tough times as part of Hashem's plan to take us from a good place and get us to an even better place—or because He wants to bring the world where it needs to be. We need to have the perspective of *kol de-avid Rachmana le-tav avid*. We need to know that every difficulty is for a good purpose, and that it's ultimately a chesed. On Rosh Hashanah, *sifrei chayim* and *sifrei meisim pesuchim lefanecha*, we don't say Hallel, etc., and Arizal said you should cry. Nevertheless, we are told: *ichlu mashmanim ve-shesu mamtakim ve-shilchu manos le-ein nachon lo...ki chedvas Hashem hee ma'uzchem*. It's a time of great celebration. And maybe one of the levels of meaning is that on Rosh Hashanah, we are supposed to feel the eimas ha-din, all the tzaros, and how precarious our situation is. But at the same time, we put that into the context of a *tekiya le-faneha u-le-achareha*. This helps us appreciate that all the bad things in the world, all its dangers, and all the tzaros are only part of Hashem's Divine plan to be good to us in the world. And we need to pass

some challenges and difficulties to achieve the good that Hashem has coming to us. And ultimately, Rosh Hashanah is a celebration because whatever *gezar din* we have, whatever type of a year that we get, it's only an opportunity for growth and accomplishment—for fixing what we need to fix. And, of course, it's for our ultimate good. Rambam has only one mitzvas asei in Hilchos Ta'anios—*ve-harei'osem ba-chatzotzros*. He says that the pashut pshat of *ve-harei'osem ba-chatzotzros*, on the simplest level, is that we must recognize the need to do teshuva—that we need to turn to Hashem and daven. But the *omek ha-peshat* is that a *tekiya le-faneha u-le-achareha* is to realize that the same chatzotzros that we blow in times of trouble, are also sounded *be-yom simchaschem u-ve-moadeichem*. Even the bad things are ultimately for the best. And we should see in them the opportunity to accept Hashem's chesed, even if we don't understand exactly how it works. Eventually, the troubles of *teru'a* will end, and we will get to the final maskana of the *tekiya she-le-achareha*. Shabbat Shalom.

Great Minds and Great Wisdoms

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Moshe's authority has become unsteadied and is teetering on the edge. Having faced a barrage of complaints and grievances, he is forced to delegate some of his authority to a newly formed Sanhedrin. Excluded from this project, two renegade prophets further subvert Moshe's authority by prophesizing in an unlicensed manner. According to some reports they predicted Moshe early "retirement", implying that he would not steer the nation to the promised land. Moshe, his authority and his future leadership have become the talk of this small desert town. To paraphrase Henry Kissinger "[small town] politics are so vicious precisely because the stakes are so small." Before things turn ugly, Moshe's could use some reinforcement.

Instead, Moshe's siblings begin to discuss his marriage. Married to an exotic wife, and designated for constant prophetic "readiness", Moshe certainly had a "different" marriage. Miriam and Aharon's initial conversation seems harmless, and we don't detect and malice or sinister intent. Quickly though, the conversation veers, becoming more discourteous and more vindictive. Envious of Moshe, his siblings wonder aloud about his distinctive prophetic

station. "After all, God spoke with them as well! Why does Moshe behave as if he were different"? Their insensitive chatter about his personal life has morphed into a direct assault on his leadership and his divinely ordained prophetic charge.

It is unclear how harmless conversation about Moshe's marriage turned into a toxic attack of his behavior. Either way, Hashem's response makes the deeper intentions of his siblings clear. First, the Torah defends Moshe's unassailable integrity, designating him as the most humble man alive, privileged, in part, due to his modesty, to unmatched prophecy. Miriam is stricken with *tza'arat*, an affliction generally associated with the sin of slander. Regrettably, at the very moment Moshe most needed backup, he was backstabbed.

Worse, Miriam's defamatory behavior seems contagious. The very next section describes the *meraglim* and their scandalous reports about the promised land. Miriam's slurs invite the cynicism of the spies and, ultimately, a mass rebellion against Hashem and a four-hundred year old promise. This woeful sequence showcases the corrosive effects of slander. Disparaging others trains us

to focus upon the negative. Harping upon the negative breeds general cynicism and the loss of hope. Pessimism emasculates faith and hope, leading to religious rebellion. The entire Jewish camp was infected by viral slander, as Jewish history comes crashing down.

Oftentimes, idle and empty gossip turns vile. Slander doesn't always begin with malicious intent. Sometimes it begins with innocent talk about people and their private lives, but ends in invasive or antagonistic conversation. Too much conversation about the affairs of others, may quickly veer into denigration and slurs.

Eleanor Roosevelt once remarked: "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people". Speaking about people and their lives is toxic and leads to slander. Additionally though, unhealthy focusing upon the private lives of others shrivels the human imagination and shrinks us into smaller "spaces". Ideas stretch our imagination and broaden our horizons. Great minds avoid speaking about the daily lives of others. Small minds can't get enough of these details. We are becoming too un'idea-ed and we are shrinking. We spend too much time speaking about people and their lives, and not enough time discussing ideas. The pace of information flow in an "information age" forces us to read too quickly, leaving little space for "ideas", which require time and thought. Speaking about people doesn't require time nor does it require concentration. We face a furious "information deluge" and we accelerate our "processing" of that information, leaving no room and no space for deeper ideas. In 1934 a British poet named T. S. Elliot lamented "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?; Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?". If we spend too much time on "information" such as pointless facts and insignificant trivia, we have fewer resources available for "knowledge". Likewise, if we pursue endless volumes of knowledge- even important knowledge- we have less time to contemplate that knowledge, internalize it, and distill deeper wisdom. T.S. Eliot warned of this phenomenon close to 100 years ago. I wonder what he would say one hundred years later in the age of internet and social media.

When is the last time you thought about one idea for more than fifteen minutes? It typically takes that long to "encompass" an idea, dissect it and associate it with prior knowledge. We are barely afforded fifteen seconds, let alone fifteen minutes.

Torah Study

Interestingly the world of torah study has undergone a similar – and in many, many ways a welcome shift. Daf yomi has unquestionably revolutionized Torah, by extending Talmudic experience to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. This remarkable extension of Talmud study though, may also be diluting the "quality" of Talmud study for those who have greater time and resources available for more in-depth analysis. In depth analysis of Talmud, otherwise known as "lomdus", has receded in the modern world of Daf yomi. Again, regarding daf yomi, potential "thinning" is a price worth paying to for the broad extension of Talmud. However, the Daf yomi revolution is also creating a mode of Torah study in which we read "quickly" to keep pace with the "schedule". In our mad race to finish daf yomi, Mishnah yomi, daily Tanach or even shnayim mikra, we may not be allocating enough time for thinking, for processing and for internalizing. The information we are consuming isn't percolating long enough to become internal wisdom or deeply anchored ideas.

The Impact

How does this all impact our lives? Firstly, without wisdom we become shallow versions of ourselves. Mass knowledge can be rapidly consumed, but rarely "sinks" deeply enough into our personality to shape our identity. We aim to study Torah so that the wisdom of Hashem shapes our character. If torah is never internalized into personal wisdom we can become bifurcated- avid "guzzlers" of torah, whose inner identity remains unaffected by the word of God. The same can be said about general knowledge which is easy to process but more difficult to refine into deeper truth. Knowledge hovers "above" identity but wisdom sinks into our deep subconscious and crafts our personalities. We acquire knowledge but we become wisdom.

Secondly, shallowness invites broad generalizations of other human beings. We begin to see the world through stereotypical lenses of gender, color, race, religion, clothing, political affiliation, or lesser "codes" which don't reflect individuality or character. When we apply stereotypes to individuals, we rob ourselves of opportunity to learn from real people, their lives, their dignity, and their depth. Life becomes outlined in black and white and we lose all color.

Sometimes less is more, and more is less. In the age of "more" we often walk away with "less".

The Great Defender of the Jews

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

This week's parsha (in chutz la'Aretz), Parshas Beha'aloscha, begins with the command to Aharon ha'Kohen to kindle the lamps of the menorah in the Mishkan every evening, with a measure of oil that was enough to burn through the longest winter nights. The pasukim tell us: And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: **דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת־הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל־מִוֶּל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה וְאִירוּ אֶת־הַנֵּרוֹת**, *Speak to Aharon and say to him: When you kindle the lamp, towards the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast their light* (Bamidbar 8:2).

Why does the parsha begin with this passage, right after we read (in the previous chapter, Bamidbar Ch.7) about the donations and contributions brought to the Mishkan by the Nissim, the tribal princes? Rashi, quoting the Medrash, famously teaches:

לָמָּה נִסְמְכָה פְּרֻשֶׁת הַמְּנוֹרָה לְפָרֻשֶׁת הַנְּשִׂיאִים? לְפִי שֶׁפִּשְׁרָאָה אַהֲרֹן חֲנֻכַּת הַנְּשִׂיאִים חֻלְּשָׁה אֲזַי דַּעְתּוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה עִמָּהֶם בְּחֻנְכָּה לֹא הוּא וְלֹא שְׂבָטוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ הַקֶּבֶ"ה חֲיִיד שְׁלֹךְ גְּדוּלָּה מְשַׁלְּהֶם, שֶׁאַתָּה מְדַלֵּק וּמְטִיב אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת.

Why was the chapter of menorah placed right after the chapter of the contributions of the tribal princes? Because when Aharon saw the dedication brought by the princes, he felt bad (lit. 'his mind was then weak'), for neither he nor his tribe (of Levi) were included in these princely offerings. Seeing his pain, Hashem said to him: I swear by your life (G-d took an oath, keviyachol), that your reward is greater than theirs, for you will prepare and kindle the lamps of the menorah (Rashi to Bamidbar 8:2).

In his Short and Sweet on the Parsha, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Bregman writes, "Once a person becomes the leader of a community, he has to take in and relate to all types of Jews. He has to be willing to service all of them - not just the 'type' most similar to him, or the ones with whom he's most naturally comfortable. There is a hint to this crucial lesson at the beginning of our parsha.

"Rashi and Medrash Tanchuma explain that when Aharon saw the donations to the Mishkan made by the leaders of the tribes, he felt bad, because neither he nor his tribe (the Leviim) had been included in the inauguration. The question is - why is Aharon the Levite that the Torah singles out for feeling bad? In truth, Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader of shevet Levi, not Aharon! Why is it that Aharon's emotions are the ones expressed as speaking on behalf of his tribe?

"The answer is: Yes, Moshe was the greatest of the Leviim. However, from the time he had become the leader of the entire Jewish people, he could no longer serve as spokesman on behalf of his tribe. He now had to be able to identify with and advocate the feelings of all of Klal Yisrael. It was no longer appropriate for him to be the mouthpiece of his tribe of origin. Therefore, Aharon now had to step into these shoes and advocate for the spiritual welfare of the Leviim. As leader of the entire community, Moshe Rabbeinu was no longer eligible... A Jewish leader must have positive feelings towards every type of Jew... This is because an authentic Jewish leader is responsible for servicing the spiritual needs of every single person in the flock" (*Short and Sweet on the Parsha*, Feldheim, p.355-356).

While we may have thought that Moshe, as leader of the nation, and his tribe, should be the one to "feel bad" for being left out, and advocate before G-d on behalf of the Leviim for a spiritual benefit and reward, this role fell to Aharon instead. For once Moshe became the leader of the flock, he could no longer represent one specific tribe - not even the one from which he came! He was now a beloved leader and advocate for the entire nation.

It happened one Friday afternoon that R' Beinish Mandel, a talmid from Rav Nosson Tzvi's early days as a rosh chaburah (HaRav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt'l, 1943 - 2011, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim), was visiting Eretz Yisrael and visited the home of the Rosh Yeshiva a few hours before Shabbos. He saw the Rosh Yeshiva sitting with two young men wearing jeans and t-shirts, with Chumashim open in front of them. When they left, R' Mandel incredulously asked Rav Nosson Tzvi, 'You were learning Chumash and Rashi with them?!' 'Yes,' the Rosh Yeshiva replied simply. The boys were obviously not in the Mir, and not anywhere near Rav Nosson Tzvi's level of learning. 'Why?' R' Mandel could not help but ask, 'Why did you learn with them?' With a shrug, Rav Nosson Tzvi answered, 'Because they asked.'" (*Rav Nosson Tzvi*, Artscroll, p.280-281).

A further reiteration of this idea, that a leader must embrace each member of the flock equally, can be found in the introduction to the Birkas Kohanim. The Torah says: **וְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאָל־בָּנָיו** - *Speak to Aharon and to his sons saying: כֹּה - כֹּה (or thus) you shall bless the children of Israel*

(Bamidbar 6:22-23). What lesson can be derived from the word 'כה'?

The tzadik, Rabbi Yisrael of Modzhitz (1849-1920) zy'a, teaches: ... כה תברכו את בני, עליכם לברך את בני כמות שהם. "So you shall bless the Children of Israel: It is incumbent upon the kohanim to bless the Children of Israel as they are! That the kohanim should bless them all equally, every Jew, who stands before him. He should not, in his blessings, give preference to the great and important people in the nation, nor should he show favor to the pious and righteous Jews.

The Message of the Manna

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this week's parasha, Parashat B'ha'a'lot'cha, we encounter the *A'saf'suf*—האספסוף, the so-called "mixed multitude," who were dissatisfied with the Manna, the food that had been coming down from heaven. The people craved meat. In a bold and offensive manner, the people complain to Moses that they would prefer to return to slavery in Egypt, rather than live on the detestable diet of Manna.

The Torah, in Numbers 11:7-9, testifies that these complaints are entirely unjustified. Manna, the Torah declares, was an exceptional culinary delight. והמן כזרע גֹד, ועינו כעין הבדלח, הוא, *now the Manna was like the coriander seed, and its color was like the color of crystal.* וְשָׂטוּ הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ, אוֹ דָכוּ בַמִּדְבָּרָה, וּבְשָׂלוֹ בַפָּרוֹר, וְעָשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עֲגוֹת, The people would stroll around and gather it, grind it in the mill, or pound it in the mortar to cook it in a pot and make it into cakes. It tasted like the taste of dough, kneaded with honey. The Rabbis declare that, in fact, the Manna tasted like whatever a person wanted it to be: steak, pizza, ice-cream. Sounds very much like what we today call "Tofu." How could anyone complain?

Manna, in essence, represents sustenance from heaven. The ancient Israelites, who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, always knew from where their next meal would come, every single day! Although much has changed in the last 3,300 years since the food dropped from the skies, people still have the same concern about feeding their families and are constantly worried about delivering tomorrow's nourishment.

Of course, providing for the needs of a household requires a means of support. One of the fundamental concepts driving and determining the course of much of today's

Rather, he should see every Jew as equal as they stand before him, and bless them all with a full heart" (Parparos La'Torah, Bamidbar, p.43).

Perhaps when we see the importance in each and every Jew, and we advocate, pray for, and help each other, then we will be zocheh that G-d will see the chashivus of our nation as one united whole. Perhaps then He will restore to us the service of the BHM"K, when once again the Kohanim will kindle the lamps and bring the light of Torah to our world, and we will see the ultimate fulfillment of the Birkas Kohanim: v'ya'sem licha shalom.

society is "career." Ask any person to identify themselves, and they most often respond: butcher, baker, candlestick maker. Practically no one refers to themselves as parent, spouse, doer of good deeds, or philanthropist. Our society has set "career" as the primary form of self-identity.

In years past, a career was merely a way of putting bread on the table, of making certain that the babies' stomachs were filled, and providing proper shelter. Careers would be pursued, but not worshiped. The primary functions in life would be "husbanding" and "wifeing," mothering and fathering—making a life, rather than making a living. Sadly, we've lost perspective of what function our jobs are supposed to play, and have allowed our jobs, in essence, to become our lives.

The Malbim is one of the most insightful commentators on the Bible. His perspicacity and understanding is so profound, that his words read as though they were written thousands of years ago, rather than less than 150 years ago. In his commentary on Exodus 16, where we are first introduced to Manna, the Malbim argues that G-d's purpose in providing food from heaven was to inspire the human being to look heavenward, to see how kind G-d is. With the Manna, G-d relieved the ancient Israelites of back-breaking labor and arduous farm work, and the Manna providing them with physical and spiritual nourishment on a daily basis.

The Malbim cites seven important lessons to be gleaned from the heavenly bread: 1) Manna teaches that the key to economic success is ultimately in G-d's hands. Those who think of themselves as unerring stock pickers are in for a rude awakening. 2) The Malbim argues that bread, as much as it seems to be a product of the earth, is really a product of

the heavens. Humans may plant the seed, but without rain and sun, all effort is for naught. 3) Manna teaches that the portion that one is allotted for consumption is basically fixed in heaven. One need not overwork to succeed. One need only make the basic effort, because, ultimately, G-d provides. 4) Even more important than mastering new skills and work techniques, is the fundamental requirement of mastering the art of having faith in G-d as the Ultimate Provider. 5) The Manna teaches that food is sacred. To appreciate sanctity, every person must focus on the source, and prepare to be worthy of receiving that sacred gift. 6) Every person's expenses are predetermined. Adding to one's personal possessions will not necessarily result in greater happiness, except in spiritual matters. So, for instance, one may achieve greater happiness by purchasing or preparing special Shabbat delicacies and treats. 7) And, finally, through the observance of Shabbat, by not laboring to gather the Manna on Shabbat,

the workday week becomes more bearable and meaningful, providing fulfilling goals toward which to aspire.

We, who are blessed to live in the "instant" age and the age of abundance, have lost much of our ability to appreciate the beauty of the moment, the blossoming of the flower, the clearing of the sky after the rain, the embrace of a child. Our frenetic-paced lives and demanding careers, have reduced us as humans, by stealing much of our humanity.

Dennis Prager, the West Coast author and radio host, quotes a rabbi saying that he'd never met a congregant who, with his last dying breath, had complained, "O Rabbi, O Rabbi, how I've wasted my life. Why didn't I spend more time at the office?"

"Live the meaningful life," is the message of the Manna. Let us make the effort to master this message, before our jobs, our labors and our careers master us.

Unquenchable Spiritual Ambition

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

Parshas Behaaloscha begins with the *mitzva* of the kindling of the *menorah*, and Rashi famously draws a connection between this subject and the previous section in the Torah – the special *korbanos* offered by the *nesi'im* (the leaders of the tribes) to celebrate the inauguration of the *Mishkan*. Rashi explains that Aharon felt despondent over the fact that he did not participate in these special sacrifices. Every other tribe took part, as on each day for twelve days, every *nasi* offered elaborate *korbanos*. The only exception was Aharon's tribe – the tribe of Levi – which did not take part. Aharon was upset. God sought to settle Aharon's mind by reminding him of the great privilege he had to kindle the *menorah* each day in the *Mishkan*. He was assured, שלך גדולה משלהם – his privilege was greater than that of the *nesi'im*.

We might, at first glance, question Aharon's reaction to the *nesi'im*'s offerings, which perhaps strikes us as inappropriate, and even petulant. Aharon was not an immature child, who cries, "It's not fair!" when seeing others doing something which he was not able to do. Can we possibly imagine Aharon, the great *tzadik*, "kvetching" about being excluded from the *nesi'im*'s offerings?

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein explains that in truth, Aharon's reaction is a testament to, and a reflection of, his greatness. A great deal can be learned about a

person from where he directs his drive and ambition, from what he is constantly pursuing. Some people constantly strive for material "upgrades," for a nicer and larger house, a more luxurious car, and a more lavish lifestyle. Spiritual giants like Aharon are constantly striving for more opportunities to connect to Hashem. And so he was disheartened that he was not able to participate with the *nesi'im*. He saw the *korbanos* they offered on this special occasion, and how meaningful they were, and he felt he missed out on a precious opportunity for further growth, for another precious *mitzva*, for deepening his relationship with God.

This theme resurfaces on several occasions later in the *parsha*. We read, for example, of the *טמאים*, those who were unable to offer the *korban pesach* the first year after *Yetzias Mitzrayim* because they had become *tamei* (impure). I imagine that if any of us would be given the opportunity to receive an exemption from Pesach one year, we would eagerly seize it. We need to look no further than the excitement people express when *tachanun* is skipped in *davening*... But these *טמאים* were dismayed by the prospect of losing this precious *mitzva* opportunity. They approached Moshe and cried, למה נגרע לבלתי הקריב את – "Why should we lose out by not offering God's sacrifice?!" (9:7). They refused to accept an exemption; they wanted to perform this *mitzva*. Hashem responded by

granting them the opportunity of *Pesach Sheni*, to make up the missed *korban* a month later, on the 14th of Iyar.

If somebody aspires to wealth, he relishes every opportunity to earn money, and bemoans every such opportunity which was squandered. When a person aspires to spiritual greatness, he relishes every opportunity to perform a *mitzva*, and bemoans every such opportunity which was squandered. This is why Aharon was distressed over not having participated in the sacrifices of the *nesi'im*, and why the *טמאים* were dismayed over their inability to offer the *korban pesach*.

This theme manifests itself yet a third time later, when the Torah speaks of *Benei Yisrael's* journey from Mount Sinai: 10:33 (ויסעו מהר ה'). *Tosfos* in *Maseches Shabbos* (116a) bring the Midrash's comment that *Benei Yisrael* left

Our Shul

Rabbi Yehuda Mann

This week's parshah includes the descriptive phrase, "On the day the tabernacle was erected." (Bamidbar 9:15) The Talmud deduces from "on the day" that the Beit haMikdash may only be built during the day. (Shevuot 15b) The Rambam brings this as law, and in the same line he adds that all Jews are obligated to build the Beit haMikdash, men and women. Rabbi Yosef Karo explains that this is because the Mishkan was built by everyone, women and men alike. Even children are commanded in this mitzvah, but we don't close the schools in order for the children to build, because of the importance of their Torah study. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Beit haBechirah 1:12, and Kesef Mishneh there)

In recent centuries, authorities have raised an obvious question: if the Beit haMikdash must not be built at night, then this is a timebound commandment, and therefore women should be exempt. If so, how does the Rambam say that women are obligated in the mitzvah of building the Beit haMikdash like men? [See Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky, *Kehillot Yaakov*, *Shevuot* 10 for some discussion of this issue.]

Perhaps women are obligated because the mitzvah of building the Beit HaMikdash is not a mitzvah incumbent upon the individual, but rather it is a mitzvah incumbent upon the public. As the *Sefer haChinuch* says, "And this is among the commandments that are not impingent upon the individual, but rather

Mount Sinai כתינוק הבורח מבית הספר – as a child running out of school when the bell rings. They were relieved to finally be leaving Sinai, before receiving even more *mitzvos*. *Benei Yisrael* are criticized for this attitude, for feeling overjoyed that they would not be given additional *mitzvos* to observe. We are to live with spiritual ambition, always aspiring to do more, always looking for opportunities to perform *mitzvos*.

Whether it's *ma'ariv* with a *minyan* on a normal weeknight, another *shiur* or *devar Torah* that we have the opportunity to hear, or another opportunity to help somebody by doing a favor or giving *tzedakah*, we should eagerly relish every such opportunity to achieve and become greater.

upon all of the community." (Mitzvah 95) Perhaps we distinguish between men and women only regarding mitzvot that are upon the individual; then we examine if this individual is male or female, young or old. But once this is a mitzvah upon the public, then all who are part of the public are obligated.

We may support this idea from the mitzvah of brit milah. The Talmud says that the father has precedence in the mitzvah of brit milah, and he has the right to circumcise his son before anyone else. The Talmud also says that the mother is not obligated in the mitzvah of circumcising her son. (Kiddushin 29b) However, if the father does not circumcise his son, the mitzvah is now set upon the *beit din*. *Rabbeinu Asher* (*Chullin* 6:8) claims that placing the mitzvah upon the *beit din* doesn't mean it is upon only those few rabbis. Rather, it is a mitzvah for the entire public. The *beit din* is a vessel for the public's responsibility to perform particular commandments. *Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz* explains that because of this, the mother is obligated in the mitzvah as well. (*Panim Yafot Lech Lecha*) We see from here that during the time the mitzvah of brit milah was incumbent upon the individual father, we distinguished between men and women, but once the mitzvah became a mitzvah of the public, women became obligated as well.

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau (*Yachel Yisrael* #5 and

#21) explains that this may be why children would be obligated to build the Beit haMikdash, if not for our concern about their Torah study. Since when are children who are not in the age of mitzvot obligated in a mitzvah? He answers that because the obligation of building the Beit haMikdash is a mitzvah that is incumbent upon the public, children are included in that public as well.

The message we can learn from here is that the Beit haMikdash is a place that all of the Jewish people have a part of – men, women and children. Today we don't have a Beit haMikdash, but we have a mikdash me'at our shuls. And like the Beit haMikdash, we have to make sure that our shuls are welcoming to all – men, women and children – and make sure that they are all benefiting and growing spiritually in them.

So Near and Yet So Far: Derech Rechoka and Pshuto Shel Mikra

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein

One of the events discussed in our parsha is Pesach Sheni. The verse relates how certain people, who were unable to bring the Pesach offering on the fourteenth of Nissan, complained to Moshe about being excluded from the mitzvah. The response from Hashem was that they could bring the offering a month later on the fourteenth of Iyar – known as Pesach Sheni. The criteria for eligibility for his second opportunity are set forth in our verse, which describes the person's state during Pesach itself that rendered him unable to bring the offering together with everyone else.

Commenting on the term a “distant road,” Rashi writes:

דָּרָךְ רְחוֹקָה: נִקְדוּ עָלַי, לֹא שֶׁרְחוֹקָה וְדָאֵי אֵלָא שֶׁהִיא חוּץ לְאַסְקוּפַת הָעֶזְרָה כֹּל זְמַן שֶׁחִיטָהּ.

There is a dot on the word *rechoka* to say, not that [the road] is actually distant, but that [the person] was outside the threshold of the Courtyard [of the Mishkan] for the entire period of slaughtering [the korban].

The background to this comment is a dispute recorded in the Mishnah in Pesachim 93b regarding our verse.

According to R' Akiva, the term “rechoka” denotes, as it implies, a person who was geographically too far away from the Beis Hamikdash to be able to get there in time to offer the Pesach.

According to R' Eliezer, it refers to anyone who was outside of the Temple courtyard for the duration of the offering. To this, R' Yose in the Mishnah there adds that this approach is supported by the dot on top of the word *rechoka*.

Accordingly, we can summarize by saying that Rashi has adopted R' Eliezer's view in the Mishnah regarding “a distant road”, and not that of R' Akiva.

Ramban's Objection – Prioritizing Pshat

The Ramban cites Rashi's interpretation and objects to

it very strongly. Firstly, he points out that the halachah appears to be in accordance with R' Akiva's view. Now, of course, that alone is not sufficient grounds to reject Rashi's explanation. After all, Rashi's job is not to inform us as to the halachah, but rather to present the pshat interpretation of the words in the verse – and halachah and pshuto shel mikra are not always identical. However, the Ramban adds that in terms of pshat as well, R' Akiva's explanation is to be preferred, for surely the pshat meaning of the words דָּרָךְ רְחוֹקָה is “a distant road”!

The Mizrachi's Response – Defining “Mikra”

Rabbeinu Eliyahu Mizrachi, foremost among the commentators on Rashi, responds to the Ramban's objection in a disarmingly simple way, namely, that in light of the dot on top of the word רְחוֹקָה, R' Eliezer's view emerges as closer to pshuto shel mikra than that of R' Akiva!

What are we to make of this exchange? After all, the Ramban, too, is well aware of the dot on top of the word, as can be seen from his commentary. About what, then, are they arguing?

It appears that what we have before us is a most unusual dispute regarding pshuto shel mikra. Normally, a dispute in this realm would revolve around what is the pshat in a particular verse. In our case, however, the matter being disputed is the definition of the term mikra itself! What is the entity that is called “mikra” whose pshat meaning we are endeavoring to explain?

According to the Ramban, “mikra” comprises the words in the Torah that make up the verses. Any other elements that feature together with the words, such as dots on top of the letters etc., are not categorized as mikra. As such, pshuto shel mikra will only take into account the words themselves.

According to Rashi, “mikra” – scripture – is defined

as everything that is written in the sefer Torah. This includes, first and foremost, the words themselves, but it also extends to anything else that is written in the Torah, including dots on top of the letters. Accordingly, pshuto shel mikra will also factor in the presence of those dots and their contribution to our understanding of the word.

Text and Context in Pshuto Shel Mikra

A further dimension in Rashi's interpretation is presented by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. (Likkutei Sichos Vol. 8.) He reminds us that when learning Rashi, it is important to pay attention, not only to what Rashi says, but also to the words that he cites in his dibbur hamaschil (headline) as the words on which he is commenting. In our instance, Rashi's dibbur hamaschil is או בדרך רחוקה (or on a distant road). Now, seemingly, Rashi's comment only concerns the two words דרך רחוקה. Why, then, does he also include the word או in his headline?

The Rebbe explains that it is actually the word או that causes Rashi to adopt R' Eliezer's approach. The verse first discussed someone who was tamei and thus unable to offer the korban Pesach. By the fact that it then presents the alternative scenario of "or on a distant road," we see that the verse is addressing the fact that there can be more than one reason why a person would be unable to bring the korban. However, by the same token, there can be more than two reasons! Why make a point of giving more than one example, while then leaving the list of possibilities incomplete?

For this reason, Rashi adopts R' Eliezer's approach, whereby "a distant road" actually incorporates any reason that would leave the person physically unable to be present in the Temple courtyard. This, together with the halachic ineligibility expressed by "tamei", now makes up the entire range of possibilities!

We see from here that the idea of pshat often goes beyond simply translating the words. Rather, it also embraces a syntactical sense of the role of these words within the verse.

Was there a "distant road" in the Wilderness?

Taking the discussion one stage further, one of the classic commentators on Rashi, the Be'er Basadeh, maintains that R' Eliezer's minimized understanding of "a distant road" can be demonstrated from within the verse itself, which reads:

אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה טָמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ אוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ רְחֹקָה לָכֵם אוֹ לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם.

If any man will become impure through a corpse or will be on a distant road, for you or for your generations.

We see that the two scenarios of "impure" and "a distant road" are presented as being of relevance both "for you," i.e. the Jewish people in the Wilderness, as well as "for your [subsequent] generations." Now, in the Wilderness, no one among the Jewish people was actually distant from the Mishkan, as the entire people were encamped around it, yet we nevertheless see that they could be in the category referred to as "a distant road." This confirms R' Eliezer's view that the distance is not geographical in nature, but rather represents the inability to be present in the Courtyard at the time of the Pesach offering! Thus, with the verse itself having stated that "a distant road" applies to the Jewish people at that time, Rashi adopts R' Eliezer's position as the pshat.

This is a most compelling point, so much so that it moves us to wonder how R' Akiva could explain "a distant road" as denoting actual distance, when no such distance existed for the Jewish people at that time!

The explanation of R' Akiva's position will take us back to an idea we have discussed earlier on, which we referred to as the "A-B, A-B structure," whereby a verse will sometimes first present two things and then proceed to elaborate upon them respectively. In other words, the verse starts [phrases one and two] by presenting idea A and idea B and then goes back [phrases three and four] to further develop or qualify idea A and idea B.

Applying this approach to our verse, we note that it begins by mentioning two situations: 1) impure and 2) on a distant road, and then presents two elaborative phrases: 1) "for you" and 2) "for your generations."

Applying the A-B, A-B methodology, the Chasam Sofer (Responsa sec. 141.) explains that the verse is indicating that the first situation – "impure" – can indeed apply "to you" in the Wilderness, while the second situation – "on a distant road" – is one that applies only "for your generations" and not to you, since no one is that distant from the Mishkan. Looked at in this way, the verse actually supports R' Akiva!

It is indeed fascinating to see how two seemingly straightforward words lead us to analyze anew every element within the verse, as well how these elements relate to each other, and thereby endeavor to determine which interpretation answers to the designation of "Pshuto Shel Mikra."