

# חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

# Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

## Topics Covered

### Parashas Naso

#### I

- ▶ **The uniqueness and power of “Birchas Kohanim” (the “Priestly Blessing”)**
- ▶ **The necessity of love in the Kohen’s relationship with the people**
- ▶ **The source of love in the service of the Kehunah (priesthood)**
- ▶ **Aharon as the model of peace and unity**
- ▶ **The Kohen as a channel for Hashem’s blessings**
- ▶ **The blessing of parents: a tradition of love**

#### II

- ▶ **The connection between Birchas Kohanim and the Nesiim (tribal leaders)**
- ▶ **The eternal message of Birchas Kohanim**
- ▶ **The connection to the korbanos (sacrificial offerings) of the Nesiim**

## Parashas Naso

For any questions, comments, or to join the mailing list, contact the author at [chamudeishai@gmail.com](mailto:chamudeishai@gmail.com)

#### I

### The uniqueness and power of Birchas Kohanim

Each of these topics includes unique and fascinating aspects, which we will examine separately, and subsequently we will analyze the connection between them. We will begin with Birchas Kohanim. The blessing the Kohanim recite before fulfilling this mitzvah is: “Who sanctified us with the holiness of Aharon and commanded us to bless His people Israel with love.” This blessing is unusual among all the *birchos hamitzvos* (blessings over mitzvos) instituted by Chazal. Instead of “Who sanctified us with His mitzvos,” the Kohanim say, “Who sanctified us with the holiness of Aharon.” In other *birchos hamitzvos*, the blessing simply concludes with a description of the mitzvah, such as “regarding the reading of the Megillah” or “to kindle the Chanukah light.” Here, however, the blessing does not simply conclude “to bless His people Israel,” but rather concludes with “with love!” There is no other *birchas hamitzvah* that concludes by saying that the mitzvah is performed with love. This raises the question: Why is “love” required as part of the very essence of this mitzvah? Is this something unique to Kohanim, or does it reflect a broader principle?

## III

- ▶ **The deeper meaning of  
"This is the inauguration  
of the altar"**
- ▶ **The concept of Zos  
Chanukah**

### **The necessity of love in the Kohen's relationship with the people**

The *poskim* (authorities of Torah law) have enlightened us on this matter. The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 128:18) cites the Zohar (Parashas Naso 147b): "Any Kohen who does not love the people, or whom the people do not love, should not raise his hands," meaning, he should not raise his hands to bless the people. Love is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of this mitzvah. The Kohen must love the people whom he blesses, and the people must feel affection toward him. Only then can the blessing be received properly. From where does this unique requirement of love arise? Why is it essential specifically to this mitzvah?

### **The source of love in the *Kehunah* (priestly) service**

In our sefer *Chamudei Shai* on Sefer Shemos, Parashas Tetzaveh, we wrote about the symbolism of the choshen (breastplate) worn by the Kohen Gadol. The choshen contained twelve stones, each

engraved with the name of a different *shevet* (tribe). The Torah commands that the choshen be placed "upon the heart of Aharon" and firmly attached to the *ephod* (apron), as it says: "And you shall place into the choshen of judgment the *Urim and Tumim*, and they shall be upon Aharon's heart when he comes before Hashem... and Aharon shall carry the judgment of Bnei Yisrael upon his heart before Hashem always" (Shemos 28:30).

Rashi explains that the *Urim and Tumim* contained the *Shem Hameforash* (the Ineffable Name, the Tetragrammaton) within the folds of the choshen. As we noted there, the role of the choshen was to unite the names of Bnei Yisrael with the Name of Hashem. The Ibn Ezra, however, disagrees with Rashi and maintains that the *Urim and Tumim* did not function through the power of the *Shem Hameforash* but was an independent heavenly spiritual entity. Yet we followed the path of Rashi and found an allusion to his view in the verse in our parashah that immediately follows the three verses of Birchas Kohanim: "And they shall

place My Name upon Bnei Yisrael, and I will bless them" (Bamidbar 6:27).

"And they shall place My Name," alludes to the *Shem Hameforash* within the choshen *hamishpat*. "Upon Bnei Yisrael," alludes to the names of the *shevatim* engraved upon the stones of the choshen. Thus, through this connection, and only then, "I will bless them." Indeed, when the Beis Hamikdash stood, the Kohanim would pronounce the *Shem Hameforash* during Birchas Kohanim in the Mikdash, which is "before Hashem. (Mishnah, *Sotah* 7:6). The *Shem Havayah*, blessed be He, associated with mercy and love, stands at the center of every blessing in Birchas Kohanim.

### **Aharon as the model of peace and unity**

Aharon HaKohen HaGadol (the High Priest) is the symbol of peace: "loving peace and pursuing peace" (*Pirkei Avos* 1:12). When he carried the choshen upon his heart, he embodied unity and compassion toward all of Israel. Only one who truly loves the people, like Aharon, can

serve as a channel for Hashem's blessing. Therefore, the wording of the blessing is unique: "Who sanctified us with the holiness of Aharon." Instead of the standard "with His mitzvos," this blessing emphasizes the holiness of Aharon, highlighting his role as the model for Birchas Kohanim given **with love**.

### **The Kohen as a channel for Hashem's blessings**

The Kohanim do not merely give a blessing of their own. Rather, they serve as a channel for Hashem's blessings. The Torah says, "*Va'ani avarchem*" ("And I will bless them)." Hashem is the One Who blesses, but this is on condition that the Kohanim have in mind to transmit the blessings with love and compassion (see Rambam, *Hilchos Tefillah* 15:7). We can compare this to electricity: just as a wire must be free of resistance in order for the current to flow, so must the Kohen must be connected to the trait of Divine love in order for the blessing to pass through him to the people.

### **The blessing of parents: a tradition of love**

Just as the Kohanim bless the people, parents customarily bless their children every erev Shabbos with the words: "May Elokim make you like Ephraim and Menasheh" (for boys), or "May Elokim make you like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah" (for girls). "May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem shine His face toward you and show you grace. May Hashem lift His face toward you and grant you peace."

Although they are not Kohanim, parents are empowered to use these words because their love and compassion for their children carry the force of the love required of the Kohanim. A parent does not need to be taught to love his child. This love is implanted within him, enabling him to serve as a channel for Hashem's blessing to his children, the children of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The requirement of "be'ahavah," "with love," in Birchas Kohanim is rooted in the very essence of the Kohen's role: to unite Am Yisrael with

Hashem through love and compassion. This tradition, whose root is in Aharon HaKohen, teaches that the power of blessing is actualized only when it is given with genuine love.

“Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance.” Amen, may it be His will.



## II

### **The connection between Birchas Kohanim and the Nesiim**

We will now explain why the section of Birchas Kohanim in our parashah precedes the section of the korbanos of the nesiim. Rashi in Parashas Shemini (Vayikra 9:22) explains that Aharon HaKohen recited Birchas Kohanim at the inauguration of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), as it says, “Aharon lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them.” Rashi specifies that Aharon used the three verses of Birchas Kohanim: “*Yevarechecha,*” “*Ya’er,*” and “*Yisa,*” just as they appear here in our parashah.

But this is hard to understand. Why does the

section of Birchas Kohanim appear specifically in Sefer Bamidbar? And why is it placed immediately next to the section of the nesiim? The nesiim brought their korbanos at the inauguration of the Mishkan, beginning on the first of Nissan, in the second year after Yetzias Mitzrayim (the Exodus of Egypt). Sefer Bamidbar opens one month later. Why does the Torah return to this event? And in particular, from all the mitzvos that were present during the days of the inauguration of the Mishkan, why was the mitzvah of Birchas Kohanim specifically chosen to precede this section here? After all, this mitzvah is not limited to the inauguration of the Mishkan but applies for all generations! What lesson emerges from this juxtaposition?

### **The eternal message of Birchas Kohanim**

As we said, Birchas Kohanim is a mitzvah performed by the Kohanim with love, in the manner of Aharon HaKohen, who possessed a special power to unite the Jewish people and bring peace among them. Aharon carried the choshen upon his heart,

with the Shem Hameforash and the Urim and Tumim, and he was constantly performing something akin to Birchas Kohanim: blessing all of the Bnei Yisroel, praying for their unity and peace, and for their connection to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The final three words of Birchas Kohanim, “*veyasem lecha shalom,*” “and He shall grant you peace,” are Hashem’s gift of peace.

Peace is what unites us. In Shemoneh Esreh, after Birchas Kohanim, we continue this theme in the final blessing: “Grant peace, goodness and blessing, life, grace, kindness, and mercy, upon us and upon all Israel Your people. Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance.” And the blessing concludes with peace: “Blessed are You, Hashem, Who blesses His people Israel with peace.” We conclude with: “He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace upon us and upon all Israel, and say, ‘Amen.’”

### **The connection to the korbanos of the Nesiim**

Peace is the central message of Birchas

Kohanim, which unites us as a people. It seems to me that Birchas Kohanim at the inauguration of the Mishkan served this very purpose: to unite the shevatim of Israel. Only through this were Bnei Yisrael spiritually prepared to receive the Shechinah. Indeed, after Aharon's blessings, and then an additional blessing from Moshe and Aharon together, the Shechinah descended and a fire consumed the korbanos that Aharon had first offered. From this, the blessings of Aharon, the *nesiim*, as representatives of all Israel, were inspired. They were united and prepared for the inauguration of the Mishkan through the bringing of their beautiful gifts representing the twelve shevatim, as we will see in the following section.



### III

#### **The deeper meaning of "This is the inauguration of the Mizbe'ach (Altar)"**

Regarding the matter of why the Torah details the korban of each nasi individually and afterward summarized them all together, we will

first explain the following according to the approach taken by our sages throughout the generations, beginning with the words of Chazal in the Midrashim, continuing through the Rishonim such as the Ramban, and on through Acharonim such as the Chidushei Harim:

The reason the Torah details the korbanos of each individual nasi, even though the korbanos were completely identical, is to inform us that each one brought his korban with his own unique intention, not as an imitation of the one who brought before him. In my humble opinion, here too, measure for measure, Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed each one a unique love by designating words of Torah for each of them individually. And the fact that the Torah then returns and combines them all together is not only to say that they were all beloved and important before Hashem; rather, in my humble opinion, it goes far beyond this. It was a kind of rectification of the unification of the stones, where each stone declared, "Upon me shall the *tzadik* (righteous one) rest his head." As we explained in Parashas

Vayeitzei regarding the stones that Yaakov Avinu placed around his head, these stones alluded to the *shivtei Kah* (the tribes of G-d, the tribes of Israel), who were separate, but then elevated themselves to total participation—mirroring the unity of Bnei Yisrael, who share only one *mizbe'ach*. So too here, the *nesiim*, each representing his *shevet*, certainly wanted on behalf of his *shevet* that "upon me the Tzadik of the world should rest His Shechinah (Divine Presence)." But Hakadosh Baruch Hu rests His Shechinah only when they are included within one another in complete unity, in the secret of "*avanim*" ("stones"), which can be read as "*a-banim*," meaning "*achdus habanim*," the "unity of the children" around one *mizbe'ach*. Only then is it "**this is the inauguration of the *mizbe'ach*,**" through the mutual inclusion of all the korbanos and donations of the *nesiim*.

#### **The concept of "Zos Chanukah"**

To understand the concept of Zos Chanukah on which, as is known, we read in the Torah the combined total of all the korbanos of the *nesiim*,

and after davening, there is also a special mitzvah, brought as *halachah* (Torah law) in the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 677*, to burn in one bonfire all the wicks and oils that remained from all eight nights:

We will preface with the famous question of the *Beis Yosef*: why did Chazal establish Chanukah for eight days? Since there was enough oil for one day, the miracle lasted only *seven* days!? It seems to me that although there was enough oil naturally for one day, within that very “natural order” there was the constant miracle of the *ner hamaravi* (the western lamp), which served as testimony to all who entered the world that the Shechinah resides among

the Jewish people. But because this miracle was constant, and we became accustomed to it, we are no longer moved by it, nor by all the miracles for which we thank Hashem when we say, “for Your miracles that are with us every day.” Therefore, Chazal established Chanukah for eight days in remembrance of all the miracles associated with the menorah: the first seven days of Chanukah correspond to the miracle where they lacked sufficient oil by natural means, and the eighth day corresponds to the permanent miracle of the *ner hamaravi*.

The concept of the total integration on the eighth day is that we must include the feeling of wonder expressed in “Al Hanisim” for all types and

forms of miracles: the revealed miracles that appear only rarely, the constant miracles to which we have become accustomed, and the hidden miracles. In this way, the feeling of wonder we experience whenever we recite “Al Hanisim” regarding “those days” will also be felt by us “at *this time*” throughout the entire year, when we say, “and for Your miracles that are with us every day, and for Your wonders and Your goodness at every moment.” Thus, following Chanukah, we extend the thanksgiving for miracles into “this time” – i.e., for the fact that the Shechinah rests among the Bnei Yisrael constantly, every day, at every moment, and at every hour.

## Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

It is stated in our parashah:

וְאִם-אֵין לְאִישׁ גֹּאֵל לְהָשִׁיב הָאֶשֶׁם אֵלָיו הָאֶשֶׁם הַמּוֹשֵׁב לֵה' לַפֶּה: – “But if the man has no redeemer to whom the debt may be returned, the returned debt shall be Hashem’s, for the Kohen” (Bamidbar 5:8). Rabbeinu, the Maharal Tzintz, explains that the verse alludes to fundamentals of *emunah* (faith) – the *hashgachah pratis* (Divine providence) of Hakadosh Baruch Hu over all Creation. Before explaining the matter, we will briefly review the *halachos* of *gezel ha’ger* (stealing from a convert):

### The halachos of *gezel ha’ger*

a. Robbing a *ger* (convert) who died: If a person stole money from a *ger tzedek* (true convert), and the *ger* died without heirs, he is exempt from paying the debt, since there is no one to pay.

b. A false oath concerning theft: If a person stole from his fellow and swore that he did not steal, and then admitted that he had sworn falsely, then in order to atone for the false oath, he is, in principle, obligated in three things:

1. Payment of the principal debt: to pay the original amount stolen.
2. An added fifth: to add a fifth to the principal. (For example, if he stole 100 shekels, he adds 25 shekels, paying a total of 125 shekels.
3. A *Korban Asham* (Guilt Offering): to bring to the Beis Hamikdash a korban called an "*Asham Gezeilos*."

This law - that repayment of the debt is given to the Kohanim - is stated explicitly in the verse: "The guilt-payment" - meaning the monetary repayment - "returned to Hashem, to the Kohen." The unusual wording of the verse is intended to reassure the thief and inform him that his repentance is accepted, even though he is paying the money to the Kohanim rather than to the person from whom he stole.

Rabbeinu explains:

When a person steals from another, the victim will ultimately suffer no actual loss if the thief fails to repay him. This is because Hashem governs the entire world and has the ability to give to each person or withhold from him. Thus, if one person takes from another, Hashem takes from the thief and restores to the victim, for "a person cannot touch that which is prepared for another."

If so, why is the thief obligated to repay what he stole?

Rabbeinu answers that the purpose of repayment is not that the victim should receive the money. Rather, Hashem desires that we not rely on Him to restore the money on our behalf, but that we ourselves return what we stole. As the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 8a) states on the verse, "For judgment belongs to G-d": thieves are not merely sinning; they're "troubling" Hashem, so to speak, to restore the stolen items. Therefore, Hashem commands the thief to return the theft himself, as if to say, "Do not trouble Me to restore it - you must return it yourselves."

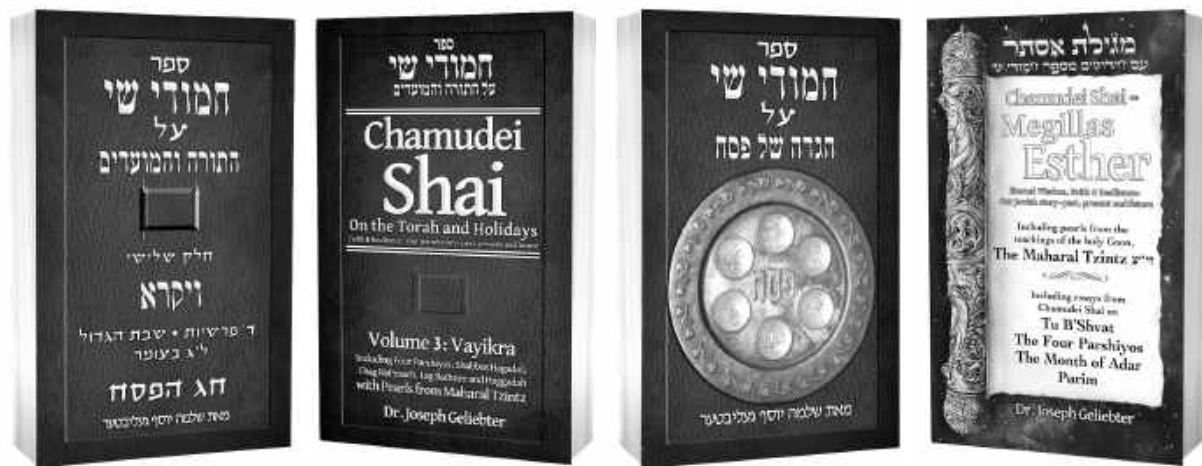
Here, however, the verse comes to reassure the one who stole from a convert and later repented, because all of the above applies to an ordinary thief, but in a case where one stole from a convert, and the convert subsequently died, leaving no one to return the stolen items to, Hashem says:

"Do not worry about your atonement. Although you did not personally restore the stolen object to him, I Myself restored to this convert that which was stolen from him. He lost nothing at all."

At this point, the thief's obligation is no longer toward the convert. Rather, it is now a debt owed to Hashem, Who, through Divine providence, restored to

the convert the money that had been taken from him. Since the debt is now owed to Hashem, He commands that it be given to the Kohanim, and through this it is considered as though the debt to Hashem has been fully repaid.

This is the meaning of the words: "The guilt-payment returned to Hashem – to the Kohen!" Since Hashem directs the world and grants each individual his allotted portion, the debt once owed to the convert has now become a debt owed to Hashem. The thief must repay this debt to the Kohen, and in doing so, he truly fulfills his obligation and merits complete and genuine atonement.



**For more information on the Chamudei Shai series,  
and to purchase copies in either Hebrew or  
English, go to**

**[www.rlgfoundation.org/publications](http://www.rlgfoundation.org/publications)  
and in Israel available at stores of**



**[www.sifreiorhachaim.co.il](http://www.sifreiorhachaim.co.il)**