



Parashat Naso - #282

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On the Parashah... A Happy Marriage

[Tal Chermon]

Parashat Naso teaches us that we must do everything possible to ensure good marital relations - even to the point of actually “blotting out” G-d’s name. One reason for this may be that the Torah places marital relations within the context of loving one’s fellow man. This Mitzvah is not only a lofty ideal to be carried out in principle, it is also an obligation to treat those around us with love every day. “Love of Klal Israel” begins with a general love of Judaism and Jews, but must also be expressed in simple acts of love for real people.

This is obviously a difficult task. It is not easy to rise to the level of those great Tzadikim who loved every member of Am Israel with all their hearts and souls. Where does one start? At the very least, we should love one member of Am Israel with all our heart. And who should that on person be? Our husband or wife. The Gemarra teaches us that the main criterion for choosing a mate should be whether we feel we can love him or her “as yourself” (Kiddushin 41a).

Once you succeed in truly loving one other person on a day-to-day basis, you have built yourself the foundation for establishing a loving relationship with everyone else. “Love your neighbor” reaches its peak when you really love your mate, despite the inevitable tensions that arise in every marriage. It’s quite easy to love a Jew living in Japan without making any compromises; loving someone you have to live with is much more difficult. There are differences of opinion, and accidental - or purposeful - slights. One gets upset or angry at the other. This may even be what the Torah means by prohibiting hatred “in our hearts.” “Hate” need not be an emotion so extreme that it leads to murder or violence; it may also be simply bearing a grudge.

But it is not only the most extreme hatred that is forbidden: even a tiny crumb cannot be tolerated - just as a tiny portion of ham is just as unkosher as a large plateful. If one mate bears a grudge against the other on account of some unkind words or action, it is considered "hatred". The Torah teaches us that in such a case one must either speak softly but firmly and ask the other why he did such a thing, or alternatively, completely forgive and forget the incident. It is absolutely forbidden to bear a grudge (Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 6:6).

Such incidents may happen every day, but it is not practical to discuss each and every one of them. If we did, it might very well be even more harmful than the little hurts which provoked the discussions. As Shakespeare put it, it causes a "tempest in a teapot." A more practical solution is to agree to simply erase such minor infractions from one's mind.

Man suffers enough from society around him. We all live within a social context from which we both benefit and suffer. Some people are so sensitive that they suffer immensely. And some people are themselves to blame for the insults they suffer, because of their own failings. In any case, by the end of the day, we are all weary from the wear and tear of our social interactions. We need a sanctuary where we are accepted unconditionally, without having to answer for our failings or to make up for them. This is not, of course, the be-all and end-all of the institution of marriage, but it is one of its important components. A mate who accepts you and loves you as you are, instead of throwing all the books at you, provides an immeasurable amount of strength and support.

This is not to say that one should completely ignore all the other's failings or confuse good with evil. Amends must certainly be made. But this only comes after the establishment of unconditional love, based on the secret of mutual "blotting out." Only after that, can we begin to correct the wrongs.

Why should you be dissatisfied with your mate, or bear him a grudge? Are you yourself perfect? Isn't it better to 'make a deal' that you will both 'forgive and forget?' Our sages declared: "He who forgives others has all his own sins forgiven." If you forgive your friends even when they don't deserve it, you will be treated the same way by the Heavenly Tribunal.

It is well known that Yom Kippur does not atone for sins committed against one's fellow man, unless that person has agreed to forgive (see end of Mishna Yoma). This is the message of the Tefilla Zaka said before Kol Nidrei. Of course, there is no need to wait until Yom Kippur. The Ari Ha-Kadosh composed a prayer to be recited every night before retiring: "I forgive every person who has sinned against me, whether accidentally or on purpose..." There were other rabbis, including Rav Kook, who even added, "I forgive those who will sin against me in the future."

This is the kind of relationship one should have with his spouse - complete readiness to forgive and forget, even in advance. Such an attitude promotes consideration, friendship, and happiness.

There is a famous story about the Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples: They once asked him whom to emulate in preparation for the High Holidays. He suggested observing

one particular man's behavior, and they saw an amazing scene: The man stood before his fireside holding two notebooks and said, "King of the World! In this notebook I have written down all the sins I have committed. Unfortunately, they are very numerous. I confess. In the second notebook I have written down all my sufferings - and You, King of the World, allowed them. I "forgive" You for all the troubles You caused me, and I ask You to please forgive me for all my sins. See, I am throwing both notebooks into the fire."

Husband and wife must also learn to throw both notebooks into the fire. Sometimes we may think: Fine, I can forgive all the hurts I suffered myself, but not the sins committed against Heaven. They are what make me angry. To this we must reply: Don't worry about God, and don't hate your husband or wife in His Name! In Parashat Naso, we learn that God commands that His Ineffable Name be blotted out in the bitter waters in order to make peace between husband and wife. No human is completely free of violence, be it verbal or physical; this is one of the most difficult tendencies to overcome. It may sometimes appear disguised as righteousness, or in the guise of admonishments and lectures on morality (see Rav Kook, "Midot Re'eya, on Tochacha), or even in a mildly antagonistic silence. Difficult as it may be to completely overcome this tendency, we should at least try to leave G-d out of it. "God is good to all, and His Mercy extends to all of His creatures" (Tehillim 145:9). He is willing for His Name to be blotted out in order to restore marital bliss.

We always advise young couples: First of all, learn to live together, only afterwards, try to attain Kedusha (a high spiritual level). Simple natural married love takes priority. A couple who aspires to build a life of holiness which is not based on simple honest love will end up with a dishonest relationship. The first step is to stop all mutual "point giving," and throw all the lists in the fire, even if they involve matters of Heaven. There is no better way to express this philosophy – that complete, mutual, unlimited forgiveness, even regarding religious observance, must form the basis for marital harmony - than in our sages' concise comment on our Parashah: "The Ineffable Name is blotted out for the sake of making peace between a husband and wife."

Rav Aviner on...

Who Should be Part of the Body that Selects the Chief Rabbi?

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Bemidbar 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

When Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook founded the Chief Rabbinate almost everyone – religious and secular - was in favor. Even the secular understood that having a country includes having religion, and that it was important for there to be a Chief Rabbi for both internal and external purposes. There were only a handful of religious Jews who did not want there to be a Chief Rabbi. People quote Ha-Rav Chaim Zonnenfeld, the head of the opposition, as having said, "At first he will be a

traditional Orthodox Rabbi, then he will be a Rabbi-Doctor, and after that he will be a reform Rabbi.” It was this he feared, and indeed, Rav Kook and the rest of the Rabbis feared this too.

It all depends on who picks the Chief Rabbi.

The Rabbis said that the ones who would chose the Chief Rabbi should, themselves, be Rabbis. The secular public refused, however, and said that the decision should be a public one. Ostensibly the Rabbis were right. I have pointed out with regards to Bezalel, the architect of the Mishkan, the Desert Tabernacle, that holiness takes precedence over wisdom, and wisdom takes precedence over the public’s opinion. Yet the secular said that throughout the generations it was the community that chose the Rabbi, and that was what should happen now as well. The Rabbis responded that there can be no comparison. At one time, the public had all been G-d-fearing, whereas now, in Eretz Yisrael, there was nothing like that. Why were they choosing a Rabbi? What did they need a Rabbi for? As stated at the start, the Mara De-Atra, Rabbinic head of the community, is the one we trust and whose word we obey, yet the secular have no intention of obeying him anyway. If so, why should they have a say in deciding? As stated, they were in favor of having a Chief Rabbi, but not in order to obey him, but to meet political needs.

In the end, a committee was set up, with the British, the Rabbis and the Jewish People equally represented. That committee in turn decided that the make-up of the voting body should be two-thirds Rabbis and one third representatives of the communities. Two-thirds of Rabbis makes a majority, and some of the communal representatives were G-d-fearing people as well. With this decision, all doubts that could have arisen were quashed, and the Rabbis prevailed.

It should further be stressed that secular individuals who choose a Chief Rabbi do not want him in order to heed his halachic rulings. They want a Chief Rabbi who will heed what they say. We can understand this desire, but that is not what a Rabbi does. That is what Ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik called “the new idolatry, idolatry to public opinion” (Divrei Ha-Rav, p. 52). In that system, public opinion determines what you must think and what you must do. You are enslaved to public opinion.

Yet, as Socrates said, public opinion can be wrong. There is no need to have learned in yeshiva to understand this. You need intelligence, just as Socrates had. What he said, however, did not curry favor with public opinion, and he therefore was sentenced to death. He was given three options: exile, silence or execution. He said, “If I am unable to say what I think, or if I go into exile and can no longer have an influence, my life is no life.” He drank poison, continued speaking, fell asleep and died. His point was: public opinion should not be the deciding factor in moral/philosophical matters.

It is certainly forbidden for public opinion to take precedence in the selection of a Chief Rabbi. It is a tertiary factor that should come only after the primary factor, which is holiness, and the secondary factor, which is wisdom, as Rav Kook explained (Ein Aya, Berachot, Chapter 9, Letter 28).

Indeed, first and foremost comes holiness. Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira, ztz"l, related that one time there was uncertainty over who should be the Chief Rabbi - Rav Herzog or Rav Charlap. In the end, Rav Herzog was chosen. Rav Shapira said, “It was a shame, because Rav Charlap was on a supreme level of holiness.” He immediately added, “Rav Herzog was holy too, but Rav Charlap was more so.” Rav Shapira grieved over what occurred, We look back nostalgically to a time when the choice was between Rav Herzog and Rav Charlap. In the end, because Rav Herzog had been

the Chief Rabbi of Ireland and was more accustomed to the Rabbinate, he was chosen. That is the sort of selection process that there needs to be. First you need a holy man.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Har Ha-Bayit - Temple Mount

Story of the Two Brothers

Q: What is the source of the story of the two brothers, one married and one single, who brought wheat back and forth for each other on the spot that became the Temple Mount?

A: It is of non-Jewish origin. See The Legends of the Jews by Louis Ginzberg.

Ascending Har Ha-Bayit

Q: Is it permissible to ascend Har Ha-Bayit?

A: 1. The Mishneh Berurah (561:5) forbids it. And in Biur Halachah, he notes that one should look in his book Likutei Halachot. He brings many authorities there who forbid entering the entire area of the Temple Mount: Smag, Sefer Ha-Chinuch, Ritba, Tashbetz, Tur, Kaftor Ve-Ferach and Sefer Yeraim. 2. The great authorities of our generation also forbid it: Shut Minchat Yitzchak 5:1, Shut Yabia Omer 5 YD #26 and Shut Tzitz Eliezer 10:1 at length. 3. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel forbids it and it is the one who decides.

Q: And is this Ha-Rav's opinion?

A: My opinion can be found in my book "Le-Mikdashech Tuv". But my humble opinion does not matter. After all, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel prohibits it. And there are signs posted by the Chief Rabbinate which say that it is completely forbidden.

Q: But there are great Rabbis who permit it and other great Rabbis who prohibit it, and these and those are the words of the Living G-d.

A: 1. There are different levels among Torah scholars. Those who forbid it are the greatest Rabbis of our generation 2. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, which is the deciding body in national issues, prohibits it. 3. Our Rabbis, Maran Ha-Rav Kook and Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, forbid it (see Shut Mishpat Cohain #96).

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