



## Honorable Mentchen: Avoiding Shaming Others

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

The Torah commands us to avoid embarrassing others. This means being careful not to mention issues that a person would find hurtful and being attuned to people's sensitivities. The Talmud in Bava Metzia goes so far as to say that if a member of someone's family was hanged you shouldn't say to the person, "Would you mind hanging up my coat?" The Sefer Chassidim says one should not kiss a baby in the presence of someone who is single and well past marriageable age. The Gemara says one is never allowed to remind someone of their past misdeeds. One shouldn't admonish someone for doing something wrong in the presence of others. One should be careful not to expose someone's ignorance in public. If someone walks into a room, one should not immediately bombard him with questions but rather give him time to focus.

One should avoid: Reveal any information that may be scandalous, saying something negative about someone who has passed away, yell or harshly criticize one's employee, give charity publicly to a person who does not want people to know he is poor, refer to other ethnic racial groups by derogatory names.

The Gemara in Bava Metzia says if you lend someone money and he cannot pay you back, you should try to avoid meeting the person so as not to cause him shame. Wealthy people should be careful not to embarrass others who are poorer than them. Making ostentatious *simchot* causes less well-off people to be shamed into spending more than they can afford to keep up. The prohibition of embarrassing someone publicly applies just as much to children as it does to adults. In fact children are much more vulnerable to humiliation. If a parent feels a child should be admonished, it should never be done in public. Teachers must be careful not to shame students.

If you solicit someone for charity be sure to ask for an amount that's reasonable for the person to give. If you ask for too much, the person may feel compelled to give more than he can actually afford to avoid embarrassment. If you are wealthy, don't talk about your financial dealings in the company of less affluent people. If you shamed someone, you should beg him forgiveness. The humiliation you'll feel as you do this will be a fair trade off for causing the person hurt.

Rabbi Teller recounts, "I teach in numerous

seminaries. I once attended an annual teachers meeting at a well-known school. There were about 50 teachers present, some very old and erudite, and we were all asked to introduce ourselves. There was one young teacher who appeared overwhelmed by the distinguished faculty. When it came her turn to introduce herself, she was so frightened she couldn't open her mouth. The head of the school quickly stepped in to save her, 'This is Mrs. Weintraub who teaches Women in Tanach.' He did it so seamlessly that most of the teachers in the room didn't even notice. It was such a beautiful moment, I could almost hear the angels singing in heaven.

Rav Simcha Wasserman once hosted a group of Jews who were not yet religious at his Shabbos table. At the beginning of the meal everyone introduced themselves. There was Richard the wholesaler and Larry the computer technician and Sam the salesman. Then Evan said, "I'm a longshoreman." There was a long pregnant silence. And then Rav Simcha without skipping a beat said, "I'm also a wasser (Yiddish for water) man just like you."

## Knesses Yisrael

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

The parsha of, "*Atem nitzavim hayom...*" is always read before Rosh Hashana. This is hinted at in the word *hayom* which Chazal say refers to Rosh Hashana, the day of man's creation. The *heh hayidiah* alludes to the day that is known as it says, "This is the day of the beginning of your actions, a remembrance of the first day." On *yom tov* we not only remember what happened long ago, but are once again given the ability to tap into the powers of the day.

There are many people who won't stand before Hashem on Rosh Hashana. There are Jews who don't even know they're Jews or that's it Rosh Hashana. Even those who do know, may not feel connected. The Alter Rebbe (Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi) says, "*Atem nitzavim hayom...*" The preparation to stand in the presence of the Creator on Rosh Hashana depends largely on strengthening the connection to *kneset Yisrael*, the body of

*klal Yisrael*. Regardless of where a Jew will be on Rosh Hashana, whether in *shul*, or at home, or in the office, every spark of *nishmat Yisrael* returns to the central flame of *kneset Yisrael*, to the root of its existence in heaven.

The Tanya says there are 600,000 *nishamot klaliyut*, general souls. These souls of the generation are the roots which divide further to 600,000 sparks. Every *nishmat Yisrael* contains a spark. A *tzadik* is a *neshama klaliyut* and his presence rests within each of the souls of *klal Yisrael* in his generation and on a deeper level in all generations. He vitalizes, invigorates, and strengthens every spark. In the verse of *Atem nitzavim*, the Torah reveals ten levels of Jews which corresponds to the *ten sefirot* (attributes) within every Jew. Three levels correspond to the intellect-*chacham*, *binah*, *daat*, while the other seven levels relate to the emotions. The entire Jewish people down to the smallest Jew

are like one body called *klaliyut kneset Yisrael*, the ingathering of Yisrael consisting of different organs. The leaders and great *tzadikim* correspond to *rasheichem*, the head and *einei haedah*, the eyes of the people.

For everything in this world that is holy, there is something counteracting it. The Gemara says that the *seir l'azzel* was thrown off the mountain and smashed limb by limb. This symbolizes the fate of Esav and Amalek. His limbs will fall apart one from the other. Esav symbolizes the world of division and separation while *klal Yisrael* comes from the world of oneness which corresponds to the *seir l'Hashem*. The Torah lists ten types of Jews in the verse of *Atem nitzavim*, among them woodchoppers and water carriers. This corresponds to the 10 powers of the soul. Within every spark of *klal Yisrael*, there exists all of *klal Yisrael*. Every Jew is bound to the entire *kneset Yisrael* through the ten supernal

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sefirot with which Hashem created the world. To understand oneself, one has to understand the 10 powers of the soul, the *atzemecha*, of how Hashem created the world and how He is revealed in the world through the 10 *sefirot*.

Knowing yourself is knowing the *Elokut* (divine part) of oneself, that which makes one special. Everything else is an outgrowth of it. People are drawn to things which are rooted in their dominant *sefira*. Trying to break that causes suffering to the soul. Even if one works at making a different attribute dominant it will never become natural. Man comes from

the root of *chesed* while women stem from the root of *gevurah*. Still within every one, there's a quality of the other, so that there's an interfacing of the *sefirot*.

Every Jew is a specific organ, an extension of the spiritual reality of the unified soul of *klal Yisrael*. Therefore in *halacha* we find that, "*Kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*." Every Jew is responsible for the actions of his fellow Jew in his generation and on some level in all generations. In the source where all souls come from, they are gathered together and

attached one to the other as one *metziut*. On Rosh Hashana even the lowest Jew rises up to the root of *knesset Yisrael*. The Torah lists the 10 levels which correspond to the 10 *sefirot* that together form *knesset Yisrael* to teach us that even the lowest of the Jews, even the water carrier becomes one with his people. On a deeper level even the lowest parts of ourselves rises up on Rosh Hashanan and stands before Hashem in the place called *klaliyut knesset Yisrael* to be reunited once again with its source.

## In the Merit of Righteous Women: Chana Part 2B

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Hashem remembered Chana and she gave birth to a son. The Midrash says it was Rosh Hashana and she was 130 years. She called her child Shmuel in recognition that Hashem listened to her prayers. A voice from heaven rang out, "He will be a *tzadik*." Chana asked for *zera anashim*. The Gemara says *anashim* is plural which hints that Shmuel had the qualities of both Moshe and Aharon. Moshe, the ultimate law giver, represented *gevurah* and *din* while Aharon the quintessential peacemaker was *chesed*.

Elkanah and his household went up to Shilo to offer up a sacrifice of gratitude. Rebbetzin Kanievski would say that when one sees a small improvement in one's situation, not necessarily the final one, one should say *Nishmat*. The act of expressing gratitude in and of itself causes changes. Chana didn't go up with her husband. She said, "Until the boy is weaned and then I'll bring him to see Hashem's face and he'll dwell there forever." We find in the Torah that when Yitzchak was weaned, Avraham made a party. Rav Hirsh explains that in an ideal state a parent looks forward to the time when his child will become independent. In the case of Yitzchak and Shmuel who were born to mothers who were quite old, just wanting them with them a while longer would have been the most natural thing. Yet they looked forward to the time when their children could dedicate themselves to Hashem.

It was greatness on Eli's part to accept Shmuel at his age because he understood the gravity of a vow, just as it was greatness on Chana's part to give him up. "And the child was a child." He acted like a child but he was verbal. The Gemara says he answered questions addressed to Eli in his presence. Eli wanted to kill Shmuel in keeping with the *din* of someone who says Torah in front of his Rebbe. Chana implored him not to do so. Eli said to her, "I could *daven* for you for another child and he'll be greater than him." But Chana said no. "This is the child I prayed for. I don't want something better. This is better." Whatever Hashem gives you in response to *tefilah* is what you're meant to have.

The Rambam says there are five different factors that make a person unique. The first is one's physical nature. Although Shmuel was bright and born circumcised, he was basically an ordinary child. The second factor is environment. Shmuel grew up in rarified sanctified surroundings. The fact that he reached the level of Moshe and Aharon didn't just stem from his giftedness but from what he was exposed to as a child. We too have to take responsibility to make sure our children grow up in an environment conducive to spirituality. There are a lot of fairly innocent pursuits where we have to ask ourselves, "Where will this take our children?" The answer isn't always so simple. Our job as parents is to make it easy for our children to find their *yetzer tov* and to do battle with the *yetzer hara*. Sometimes you have to throw the

*yetzer hara* a bone or you can end up mystifying and glamorizing something you don't want your child drawn into. But you also have to be careful not to fall in the trap of saying yes when you should say no and thereby making it harder for your child. A responsible parent will stay focused and directed, make the effort to really get to know his child, find his strengths, and capitalize on that.

The third thing that makes one person different from another is the things we teach ourselves. We learn and draw conclusions about life. In raising children you sometimes have to teach them to reframe experiences so they can see things from a different perspective and make decisions for the future. The fourth element is habit. It's very hard to break old habits. The only way to do so is by introducing new behaviors slowly. Children are young and are still flexible. If you see a bad habit developing, stop it. Give your child a new way of responding. The fifth aspect is potential. There's negative and positive potential within each of our children. We have to redirect the former while nurturing the latter. May we merit the wisdom to nurture our sons and daughters in the path of Torah so that they grow to be worthy servants of Hashem.