

## Levite Leverage: Parshat Behaalotcha

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The inauguration of the tribe of Levi to the service in the sanctuary the ritual contained elements of the purification of a *metzora* (leper), as well as rituals of sacrificial offerings. Like the *metzora*, the Levites are to shave their entire bodies. Like the grain offerings and the lulav, the Levites are to be waved in all directions. Like the animal offerings, first Bnei Yisroel would lay their hands upon the Levites and then the Levites would lay their hands on the sacrificial animals.

The Levites were chosen to serve because they had refrained from sinning with the golden calf. Why then must they undergo a process related to the *metzora*? Perhaps since they were taking the place of the firstborn in the Sanctuary, the Leviim would now, as Rashi explains, go through a purification process instead of the sinners themselves whom they were replacing. The *Metzora* is considered as dead, and those who worship idols worship lifeless, dead objects. Therefore, to atone for this sin, the Levites were given a purification process similar to the *metzora*.

Yet the *kohanim* who performed the primary service in the Sanctuary did not undergo this purification process. Rabbi Munk explains that Hashem created and administers the world through *chesed*-loving kindness, and *din*-justice. The *kohanim* represent the attribute of loving kindness. Through their

service therefore they served as appropriate vehicles to channel Hashem's benevolence to the world. The Levites on the other hand were the people who carried out God's justice and killed those who had worshiped the golden calf. In order to represent *Bnei Yisroel* in invoking Hashem's benevolence toward *Bnei Yisroel*, they would need to be stripped of the quality of harsh judgment. Therefore they shaved themselves, symbolically stripping themselves of that layer of their persona. Then they were waved around to shake up their inner character, and finally, *Bnei Yisroel* placed their hands on the Levites to complete the procedure of transformation from judgment to mercy and loving kindness.

Still, shaving the hair seems like a sign of degradation. It may be that the Levites would have experienced a sense of arrogance at taking the place of the sinning firstborns. Therefore, Hashem had them undergo a humbling experience associated with sinners. Similarly, in our own service to the Almighty, we must also act and pray with a sense of humility.

"*Ki nitunim nitunim heimah li*. For they are given given to me ... instead of every firstborn of *Bnei Yisroel*." The Levites are 'given' to Hashem twice, implying an extreme sense of devotion to God, a feeling that comes from deep within themselves, says the *Lashon Chasidim*. Hashem wants this feeling of connection and devotion from all of us. He

wants us to feel it in every *mitzvah* we do.

The Leviim epitomized this emotional attachment to Hashem and they acted on it. They also felt an overriding sense of responsibility for their brethren. Because of this, they were destined to be teachers scattered throughout the land. This is the kind of responsibility teachers must feel for each of their students, says the *Einei Yisrael*. This was the connection Shimon and Levy felt to their sister and the responsibility to take action to uphold her honor when she was defiled by Shechem. A sense of connection is at the very essence of the name Levi, "*Hapa'am yiloveh ishi elaiy*. This time my husband will become attached to me," stated his mother Leah when she named him.

Halekach Vehalebuv explains that as a corollary to this concept, when one of us sins, the entire body of *Klal Yisroel* is affected. Similarly, when one of us does *teshuvah*, all are forgiven. If we bear this in mind, if we love each other as we love ourselves and take responsibility for each other, it will be easier for us to avoid sin. Within this rubric also lies the responsibility to pray for our fellow Jew when he finds himself in difficult circumstances. We especially pray for someone to find his connection to God. Through their service, the Leviim had the responsibility of praying for *Bnei Yisroel* and maintaining that connection with Hashem.

## Wealth Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Hashem says to Moshe, "*Daber na*." Speak to the Jewish people and tell them to ask the Egyptians for their gold and silver. The Jews didn't want gifts from the Egyptians. They wanted spiritual freedom. But Hashem wanted to fulfill His promise to the avot, that they would leave with great wealth. Now the Egyptians saw that the Jews were incredibly moral and honest people, so they were prepared to give over their treasures. They respected Moshe more now that he was revealed as a leader with impeccable ethical standards. In Megilat Esther we see the same honesty upheld. Although the Jews killed 300 enemies in Shushan, "*U'babiza lo shalchu et*

*yadam*-They did not touch the spoils."

Let's return and examine the *Mishna* in Avot. The first type of person respects and honors his own property and won't steal or touch another's property. Why is this considered mediocre? The Jewish perspective on wealth has always been that it doesn't really belong to you. You can definitely use it to support yourself and your family, but it's also intended to help others. A community has the halachic power to collect taxes from the community to assist those in need.

When the *Sefer Hachinuch* discusses the

reason why a Jew may not take ribbis (interest) he notes that if Hashem gave you wealth, you're expected to use it to help other people. Our money is not ours alone. A good example of this is the *mitzva* of *peah*. When a Jewish farmer harvests his field, he must leave a corner untouched for the poor. In addition, the *mitzva* of *leket* tells us that any stalks that drop are left for the needy. If the farmer forgets something, let's say a load of hay, he doesn't go back for it, but leaves it for the poor. That is the *mitzvah* of *shikcha*. The *Sefer Hachinuch* explains the reason for the *mitzvah* of *peah*. Hashem wanted the chosen people to be crowned with good character traits, that they

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## Wealth Part II

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should have an open heart and desire to give to other people from their resources. Hashem wanted to instill within the Jewish people the traits of being a giver, of caring about other people's suffering, of sharing our prosperity

with those in need.

Giving charity is not just a kind deed. It's a debt that the wealthy must repay. There were multi-millionaires who lost all their money. Although they were giving millions to charity,

when they made a calculation each one of them realized that they weren't even giving away 10 percent of their profits. We must remember, the only reason we were granted prosperity is to help others.

## Righteous Woman in the Era of the Prophets

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Navi tells us that David Hamelech had six wives. All physical things have six sides: four directions and up and down. Six parallels the six ways in which the core of a person finds expression. The seventh aspect is *malchut* (majesty), the essence of one's self-definition.

Why did David have many wives? Why couldn't these women be married to many men? A man is compared to a flame that can light many flames without it being diminished. A woman is compared to a cup. If you fill it with wine, you cannot fill it with water. A woman wants to receive what a man gives completely, which leaves her no room for anyone else.

After David killed Goliath, King Shaul wanted to give him his daughter Meirav in marriage. Meirav refused the match. She didn't focus on David's refined character or modesty, but rather on his external characteristics which were not impressive. In contrast, Michal, Shaul's next daughter, saw *malchut* in David. She recognized that since this was her primary quality too, she was meant to marry him. She stood loyally at his side, risking her father's wrath, to save her husband. When Shaul married her illegally to Palti ben Layish, she remained faithful to David. Neither Michal nor Palti ever crossed the line between them, delineated by Palti's sword, all the many years they were together.

We learn from Meirav that people often refuse *shidduchim* because of external nonsense. She felt bother that David did not come from a royal family and that he didn't have the nobility of appearance of her father or his brothers. She could have thought she did well by marrying someone else, but in truth she lost out. In contrast, Michal valued David for what he was. She maintained the integrity of their relationship and remained faithful to him

against all odds.

When the ark was restored to its rightful place, David danced before it with no reservations. Michal watched him and was filled with shame. How could her husband the king, belittle himself like a commoner by dancing in public? Her definition of *malchut* was to some degree tainted by externality. To David, the inner dimension was important. He held himself to be like a mirror of Hashem, and just as a mirror has no self, he too had no self. Hashem punished Michal and she did not become the mother of *malchut*. She remained childless until the day she died.

In the course of the wars he fought, David defended the holdings of Naval, a wealthy Jew. Spent from battle, he asked Naval for supplies. Naval replied, "Who is this David ben Yishai?" David could've ignored this slight to his honor. But there's a *halacha* that a king may not forgo his *kavod*. A king is charged to represent something more than himself. David intended to kill him. Avigayil, Naval's wife, intervened. She brought David supplies and assuaged him, "My husband is *k'shmo kein hu*." The name Naval can mean the fool, the one who has withered, or the heretic. It describes something that had potential but soured. It's also related to the string instrument nevel. Perhaps his parents meant it to be something positive, but Naval took on the negative connotations of his name. Avigayil told David, "He's not worth killing. He could be judged as a fool who is not liable for punishment. If you listen to what I am telling you, the soul of my master will be bound with the bonds of life. If you overcome your subjectivity and see things for what they are, then your reward in *olam habah* will be beyond anything that can be envisioned." David realized she was right and decided to spare Naval. When he found out what Avigayil had done, the very idea of his wife giving away his possessions caused

him to fall sick and he died. David then married Avigayil.

Batsheva means the daughter of seven.

David's *middat hamalchut* is the seventh *middah*. Batsheva was destined to be David's mate from creation. David was a prophet and could see beyond the limitation of time. His *bechira* (point of free choice) was completely transcendental, not held down by limitations or subjectivity. He asked Hashem, "It says Elokai Avraham, Elokai Yitzchak, why not Elokai David?" Hashem answered, "You were not tested." David said, "Test me," words we should never say. Shortly after he saw Batsheva on the rooftop and discerned accurately with prophecy that she was the one destined for him. He sent her husband Uriah to the front with the intention of having him killed. He would've done this even if Batsheva wasn't in the picture because Uriah was one of Shaul's loyalists. Still he now had an ulterior reason which should've made him think that he ought to take this decision to the Sanhedrin. But he didn't. All of David's soldiers had to give their wives divorces before they went out to fight in order to prevent woman from becoming *agunot* (a woman who is unable to remarry). He summoned Batsheva who was now divorced and married her.

When Uriah returned from the front, David sent him back to die. Then Natan Hanavi came to David and said, "If a rich man steals a poor man's sheep what should be done?" David immediately said the man should die. Natan then said, "You're the man." David was a person who searched for truth. He recognized that he had sinned and he sank into mourning. He tore his clothes and put ashes on his head. The first child born to David and Batsheva died as a result of his sin. But ultimately Hashem accepted David's *teshuva* and Batsheva gave birth to Shlomo, the next future king of Israel.

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