

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Parashat Beha'alotcha  
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[darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com)  
[www.darchai-noam.com](http://www.darchai-noam.com)

How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

### Beha'alotcha – the importance of consistency

At the end of last week's Parasha of Naso we read about the inauguration offerings brought by the leaders of each tribe (except the tribe of Levi). Upon the inauguration of the Mishkan, the leader of each tribe was allocated their own day to bring an offering. This week's Parasha of Beha'alotcha begins with a description of the service of the kindling of the Menorah. Each day, Aaron, and later his descendants, would prepare and light the menorah in the Mishkan, and later in the Bet Hamikdash.

One of the principles used to interpret the Torah is that particular passages are located next to each other in order to teach us something.<sup>1</sup> In that light, the Midrash<sup>2</sup> asks why the passage about the Menorah (at the beginning of this week's Parasha) appears immediately after the passages dealing with the inauguration offerings (at the end of last week's Parasha)? The Midrash answers that when Aaron saw the offerings brought by the tribal leaders, he felt disheartened. Neither he, nor his tribe were participants in these offerings. Aaron felt that Hashem did not desire his service. Hashem placated Aaron by telling him that his service is even greater – because Aaron and his descendants would have the special task of preparing the lamps every morning and kindling them every afternoon. Thus, as explained by Rashi, Aaron's service was greater because it involved a daily action.

The Ramban disagrees with Rashi's interpretation of the Midrash. He points out:

1. Rashi's explanation does not explain why Hashem specifically mentioned the daily lighting of the Menora. Why didn't He mention the ketoret (incense) which was offered twice every day? Or the daily chavitin offering brought by the Kohen Gadol? Or any of the other offerings that the Kohanim brought?
2. Why was Aaron disheartened? During the entire inauguration ceremonies Aaron was busy bringing many other korbanot. We might think that the cause of Aaron's displeasure was the fact that the inauguration offerings brought by the tribal leaders were voluntary whereas Aaron's service was obligatory. A voluntary offering could suggest a higher level of service because it goes above and beyond the call of duty. The Ramban rejects this answer because Hashem comforted him with the service of the Menorah which was also obligatory.

Instead, the Ramban suggests that the Midrash is alluding to the future re-dedication that would take place in the second Bet Hamikdash era, when Aaron's descendants, the Chashmonaim, would rededicate the Bet Hamikdash with pure oil during the Chanukah story. Thus, Aaron's descendants would also play a role in re-inaugurating the Bet Hamikdash in the future.

The Ramban brings another Midrash which goes even further, stating that the kindling of the lamps will never be nullified, even when the Bet Hamikdash is not standing. This alludes to the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah which we perform on Chanukah to this very day. This serves to reassure Aaron that his special service will be eternal, unlike the inauguration offerings by the other tribes which were one-off.

<sup>1</sup> This principle is discussed in the Gemara on Brachot 10a.

<sup>2</sup> Midrash Tanchuma Beha'alotcha 3, brought by Rashi in his commentary to the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of our Parasha.

We have seen two explanations for the advantage of Aaron's service over the inauguration offerings – the fact that it was done every day and that it would be perpetual and carried on in the future. Both explanations share a common factor – *consistency*. We can learn from this that even though a one-off, dramatic demonstration of affection may be impressive, a continuous action that is performed again and again over a long period of time may demonstrate greater commitment and love.

That is why a thoughtful husband will regularly buy his wife flowers.<sup>3</sup> Even though flowers die after a few days, and buying a long-lasting shrub or pot plant may be more economical and practical, flowers always win the day. Regularly purchasing flowers reinforces his ongoing affection. In a similar vein, marriage counsellors like to tell the story of the clueless husband who said to his affection-starved wife: "I already told you that I love you when we were first married. If it changes, I'll let you know"!

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan<sup>4</sup> uses this idea to explain a major principle in halacha: "Tadir v'she'eino tadir, tadir kodem" – if we are faced with two mitzvot, the mitzvah that is performed more frequently (i.e., the mitzva that is 'tadir') takes precedence. All other things being equal, a mitzva that is performed more frequently is more precious to Hashem. Furthermore, serving Hashem in a more consistent manner is a more effective way to achieve sustainable spiritual growth.

There is a fascinating debate amongst the Sages as to which pasuk of the Torah is the most important.<sup>5</sup> The first three suggestions are predictable:

- "Love your fellow man as yourself"<sup>6</sup> which demonstrates the importance of caring for each other;
- "This is the book of the generation of Adam – on the day that G-d created man, He made him in His image"<sup>7</sup> – man is created in Hashem's image so everyone deserves respect and dignity.
- "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokainu, Hashem Echad"<sup>8</sup> – our declaration of Hashem's unity and our acceptance of the yoke of Hashem's kingship.

The fourth suggestion for the most important pasuk in the Torah is unexpected: "The first lamb that you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening".<sup>9</sup> This is a reference to the daily Tamid offering that was brought in the morning and the afternoon when we had the Mishkan and the Bet Hamikdash. Surprisingly, the Midrash concludes that it is the fourth pasuk which is the most important!

How can this verse, referring to the daily offering of two sheep, compete with the fundamental and all-encompassing verses suggested by the first three Sages? The answer is that the daily, seemingly mundane acts that we perform on a consistent basis are a more powerful indicator of our love and signify a higher level of service. Our regular, daily commitment to serving Hashem and working on ourselves can create a lasting impression.

Let's try something this week:

1. Try to take on one small and achievable mitzva – and try to perform it *consistently*.
2. If you are a male and married, get to know your local florist and make regular purchases!

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Ledder

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<sup>3</sup> In Israel there is a unique phenomenon of "Shabbos flowers". Every erev Shabbat and erev Chag, florists pop up all over the country offering flowers for sale in honour of the upcoming holy day. Outside of Israel there are plenty of florists that are open every day of the week, but the flowers one buys are "flowers for Shabbos", not "Shabbos flowers".

<sup>4</sup> "Tzitzit – A Thread of Light", by Aryeh Kaplan, NCSY 1993.

<sup>5</sup> This debate appears in short form in Torat Kohanim (chapter 4, midrash 12) and in an extended and slightly different form in the introduction to Ein Yaakov. For further discussion on this debate see here: <https://mizrachi.org/the-most-important-pasuk-in-the-torah/>

<sup>6</sup> Vayikra 19:18, suggested by Rabbi Akiva.

<sup>7</sup> Breishit 5:1, suggested by Ben Azai.

<sup>8</sup> Devarim 6:4, suggested by Ben Zoma.

<sup>9</sup> Shmot 29:39 and Bamidbar 28:4, suggested Ben Pazi.