

APPROVAL: WHOSE DO YOU SEEK: YOUR NEIGHBOR'S, OR GOD'S?

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Weekly Parsha

Naso

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“The priest shall prepare one as a Chatat and one as Olah to atone for his inadvertent defilement by the dead.” (BeMidbar 6:11)

Parshat Naso describes the laws governing the nazir. The nazir is a person who takes a vow to separate

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GOD'S WILL

Aurora: You said that you are not allowed to retain ill feelings, but this is not always easy. And as you said, thoughts are sometimes difficult to control. But how could we be capable of controlling an ill feeling when it comes to our mind? I don't think it can be imposed. I would say that we are less prone to retain ill feelings, in proportion to the level of perfection we achieve...but I see it just as a consequence.

Mesora: You are correct: we cannot control ill feelings, and for these feelings, we are not judged as sinners, since we cannot avoid certain thoughts. But what we must control is how we “act” upon them. For example, it is proper that we recognize the verbal abuse of another as inconsequential...than merely suppressing harbored feelings of hatred. In the former, we no longer value the words of our abuser; in the latter, we still attribute value to inconsequential statements...statements that have no affect or impact on our internal values.

The best route is to realize that the words of others have no value before God, and to further accept that all which matters, is our own perfection: the words of others plays no role in what God values.

If in our lives, God is our concern, then we will seek only His values. However, if we are insecure, living life for human accolades, we will then yearn for social approval, and we will be disturbed at the ridicule of others. This latter lifestyle is truly an empty pursuit, for why shall we value human words, over God's approval? ■

Omphile: Just recently down here in my country, some thieves decided to steal someone's cow. Nothing new, except that they decided that killing and then skinning the cow would take too long, so they just cut off one of the cow's legs and left the cow, no doubt in unimaginable pain. The cow had to be killed to end its misery when the owner found out. This crime immediately reminded me of one of the 7 Noachide laws: the prohibition to “Eat the limb of an animal in its lifetime”. When I first saw that mitzvah, I asked myself, “Who would ever do that?” Now I know better.

Still on that mitzvah, since I understand it's really a HEADING as opposed to one commandment like one of the 613, what are the subheadings under “Eating the limb”?

—Regards, Omphile

Mesora: Subheadings will be animal castration, since both - taking the limb and castration - are distortions of God's designation of a living animal. God meant living animals to procreate their species. And by relating to the live animal as food (taking the limb) or by castration...we do not view the animal, as is God's will...that it should procreate. We are, instead, viewing the animal as “we”

desire: either as food, or as a species member that we can terminate. True, once dead, animals are now categorized as food, as they can no longer procreate. But while yet alive, they must be treated as God desired...fit to procreate.

It is therefore perfectly appropriate that one of God's 7 Noachide commands must be the “Acceptance of His will”, demonstrated in this law. ■



(Naso cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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oneself from material pleasures. The nazir may not drink wine or cut his hair. The nazir is also prohibited from defilement through contact with a dead body.

A nazir who does come in contact with a dead body is defiled. The nazir must bring a series of sacrifices as atonement. One of these sacrifices is a chatat – a sin offering. Rashi explains that this sin offering is required because the nazir did not exercise adequate care in keeping the vow.[1]

Rashi's comments are not easily understood. Rashi explains that the nazir is required to bring a sin offering regardless of the circumstances surrounding his defilement. Even if the defilement occurred as a result of events completely beyond his control, he is required to bring the chatat.[2] For example, perhaps the nazir was visiting with a person who seemed to be completely healthy and suddenly the person died. If the nazir was under the same roof as the dead body, he became defiled. He could not reasonably have been expected to prevent this defilement. Nonetheless, he must bring the sin offering. This is difficult to understand. Why does the nazir required to bring a chatat even when he was not at all neglectful!

Rashi offers a second interpretation of the chatat offering. He quotes the comments of the Talmud in Tractate Nazir. Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar explains that the sin of the nazir is not merely unintentional contact with a dead body. The sin of the nazir is the self-affliction one has accepted. The nazir vowed to abandon the pleasure of drinking wine. The Talmud further comments that we can learn an important lesson from this law. The nazir is obligated to bring a chatat because of a vow not to drink wine. A person who, as a general practice, abandons the material pleasures is even guiltier.[3]

This explanation of the chatat seems to be supported by another law. A nazir who successfully completes the vow must also bring a chatat.[4] In this case, the vow has not been violated. Why is a chatat required? Ribbe

Eliezer HaKafar's explanation resolves this issue. Even the successful nazir requires atonement. The nazir must atone for his self-affliction and deprivation.

This interpretation presents a problem. Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar derives his interpretation from the requirement of the nazir to bring a chatat as a consequence of defilement. However, according to his reasoning, this chatat is not related to the nazir's defilement. It is an expression of the Torah's attitude toward the nazir's vow and a reflection of the Torah's position regarding self-denial. Why does Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar relate his insight to the chatat brought for defilement?

There are a number of answers proposed by the commentaries to this question. Torah Temimah suggests a simple explanation. In order to understand his explanation, an additional halachah – law – must be considered. When a nazir becomes defiled, he is required to begin anew the observance of his vow. Assume a person vowed to be a nazir for thirty days. On the twenty-ninth day, he became defiled. The twenty-nine days of his vow that he has already observed are no longer counted towards the fulfillment of his commitment.

Torah Temimah explains that Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar is proposing an explanation for both the chatat brought as a consequence

of defilement and the chatat brought when the nazir's vow is successfully fulfilled. In both instances, the sin offering is an appropriate reflection on the Torah's attitude towards self-deprivation. However, this message is particularly relevant when the nazir becomes defiled. Although he may have had some justification for his original vow, he will now be required to extend his period of self-denial. This additional period of self-deprivation was not anticipated when the vow was first made. Therefore, any justification that may have applied to the original vow cannot be extended to this additional period of self-denial. Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar relates his comments to the chatat brought as a result of defilement to communicate this idea. The Torah's message regarding the inappropriateness



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of self-denial is even more relevant in this case.[5]

Klee Yakar offers a similar explanation of Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar's comments. His comments are based on a simple observation: A nazir only fulfills his vow with the successful observance of the required restrictions for the entire period stipulated by the vow. In other words, if a person vows to be a nazir for thirty days, his observance of the required restrictions for only ten days is meaningless. He must conduct himself as a nazir for all thirty days. He explains that the Torah allows a person to practice self-denial in the context of the vow of a nazir. But when the nazir is defiled, he has failed to observe his vow. The period during which he successfully observed the required restrictions is meaningless. These days do not in any way fulfill his obligation. Therefore, his observance of these restrictions did not take place in the permitted context. Consequently, he must bring a sacrifice to atone for the self-denial that he practiced. Because he was defiled this self-denial is no longer regarded as a fulfillment of his vow and lacks the permitted context.[6]

Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar's comments raise an obvious question. According to Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar, the nazir has acted improperly. Yet, the Torah created the mitzvah of nazir! How can the Torah define an inappropriate behavior as a mitzvah?

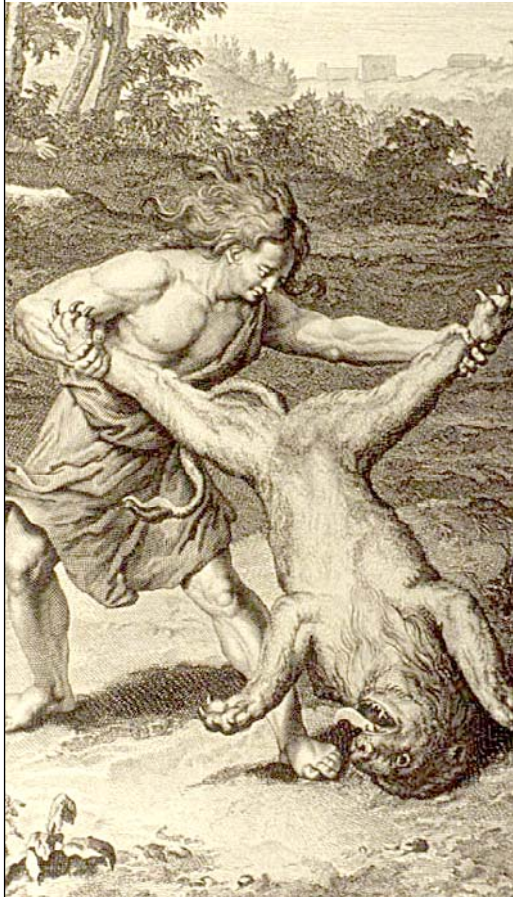
Maimonides deals with this question in his introduction to Perka Avot. He explains that for virtually every behavior or emotion there exists an opposite extreme. We must attempt to achieve moderation in all of our behaviors. This means we should strive to conduct ourselves in a manner that is balanced between the two natural extremes. A person should not be a spendthrift. Neither should one be stingy. We are not permitted to act cowardly. We also may not endanger ourselves unnecessarily. The same pattern applies to all behaviors. We must seek the middle road.

Inevitably, we all have areas of behavior in which we are at an extreme. Some of us may be overly shy. Others may be egotistical. How does one correct a flaw? Maimonides explains that the Torah suggests that we temporarily force ourselves to adopt the behavior of the opposite extreme. The stingy person practices being a spendthrift. The glutton adopts a very restricted diet. With time, this practice enables the person to break the original attachment. One will be able to adopt the moderate behavior required by the Torah.

Maimonides explains that the mitzvah of the nazir should be understood in this context. The nazir is a person who was overly attached to the

material pleasures. The nazir makes a vow to adopt the behavior of the opposite extreme. The ultimate goal is to free the personality from the attachment to material pleasures. This will allow one to adopt a life of moderation.

However, the Torah does not want us to mistakenly view the nazir's behavior as an ideal. We must recognize that the nazir's vow is intended as a cure for a personality illness. How was this message communicated? This was accomplished through the chatat of the nazir. The chatat teaches that the life of the nazir is not inherently proper. The vow is necessary in order to help the nazir achieve moderation. The ultimate goal is balanced conduct, not the extreme behavior of the nazir.[7]



“And the messenger of Hashem appeared unto the woman, and said to her: Behold now, you are barren, and have not borne; but you will conceive, and bear a son. Now, beware, I pray thee, and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. For it will be that you will conceive, and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head. For the child shall be a Nazir unto G-d from the womb. And he shall begin to save Yisrael from of the hand of the Pelishtim.” (Shoftim 13:3-5)

These passages are taken from the haftarah of Parshat Naso. They introduce the birth of the shofet – the judge – Shimshon. A messenger appears to Shimshon's mother before his birth. He tells her that she will give birth to a son. This son is destined to save Bnai Yisrael from the oppression of the Pelishtim. However, the messenger also tells her that Shimshon must be raised as a nazir and he must observe the nazir restrictions for his entire life.

Why was it necessary for Shimshon to conduct himself as a nazir? According to Ribbe Eliezer HaKafar, this is not an ideal mode of behavior. It is odd that Shimshon should be required to conduct himself in a manner that seems at odds with the Torah's values.

Gershonides offers an interesting response to this question. He explains that Shimshon was destined for greatness. He was destined to lead Bnai Yisrael and rescue the nation from oppression. However, Shimshon's potential to achieve greatness was coupled with another characteristic that could threaten his development. Shimshon also possessed very intense material desires. These desires eventually proved overwhelming. But Hashem provided Shimshon – through this message to his mother – with a strategy for combating these intense material urges. Hashem commanded Shimshon's mother that her son should be a nazir.[8] In other words, for most people, this behavior would not be appropriate. But because of Shimshon's unusually strong urges, special measures were necessary. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 6:11.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 6:9.

[3] Mesechet Nazir 19a.

[4] Sefer BeMidbar 6:7.

[5] Rav Baruch HaLeyve Epstein, Torah Temimah on Sefer BeMidbar 6:11.

[6] Rabbaynu Shlomo Ephraim Lontshitz, Commentary Klee Yakar on Sefer BeMidbar 6:11.

[7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Commentary on the Mishne, Introduction to Perka Avot, chapter 4.

[8] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shoftim 13:3.

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

THE TABERNACLE'S INAUGURATION

A close friend inquired about the Tabernacle's donations made by Israel's princes (Numbers, 7:19). Vessels of precise numeric weights, and numbers of sacrificial animals are mentioned as part of the Tabernacle's donations. Rashi offers interesting correlations between the numeric weights of vessels and the numbers of animals, and between numeric values noted in the Torah. Below I have listed the numbers that Rashi correlated. The "value" column represents either the weight of a donated vessel, or the number of a species sacrificed:

Value	Correlative
930	Adam's years
130	Adam's years when his first son was born
620	Noah's years when his first son was born
70	The nations of the world which emanated from Noah
1	One Torah
10	Ten Commandments
613	Total mitzvot
1	Abraham
1	Isaac
1	Jacob
1	The ram to atone for the sale of Joseph
2	Moses and Aaron
3	3 sets of Jews: Israelites, Levites, Kohanim, also the 3 festivals
3 x 5	2 sets of 5 commands per each tablet, 1 set of the Five Books of Moses

The question of course is, what the significance is of these correlatives? Additionally, what do these correlatives have to do with the inauguration of the tabernacle? Take a moment before reading on. Try to categorize the correlatives.

It is interesting that the correlatives fall into three categories:

Populating Earth	Torah Transmitters	Torah
930	Adam's years	
130	Adam's years when his first son was born	
620	Noah's years when his first son was born + 20 years prior to the Flood's decree	
70	The nations of the world which emanated from Noah	
1	One Torah	
10	Ten Commandments	
613	Total mitzvot	
1	Abraham	
1	Isaac	
1	Jacob	
1	The ram to atone for the sale of Joseph (?)	
2	Moses and Aaron	
3	3 sets of Jews: Israelites, Levites, Kohanim, the 3 sections; Torah, Prophets, Writings	
3 x 5	2 sets of 5 commands per each tablet, 1 set of the Five Books of Moses	



It appears that God's will here, is that man's attention be drawn to three concepts upon the erection of the Temple - the completion of the system of the Torah. All else was complete except for the building of the Tabernacle. Upon its completion, God willed that these three categories of importance be recognized as the primary goals of human life:

1) Man must Populate the world; 2) Man must follow/recognize competent Transmitters of the law; and 3) Man must recognize Divine law.

1) The essentiality of man populating the world is self-evident. God created the world for the sake of man to appreciate his Maker. Therefore, all members of mankind must admit to the good which they enjoy as created beings, and bestow that very good on another human, by procreating. The act of procreation is a father's recognition of his ultimate benefit: God formed him as created, thinking being. Procreation is a father's endorsement of life - intended by God, for others too. The father follows his Creator's command to procreate.

The reason why only Adam's and Noah's ages at their first child's' births are mentioned, although countless others contributed by fathering children, is due to the exclusive role both these men played. They were the only two people who can be considered "population's forerunners". Adam was the cause of all mankind, and Noah began the world again in the post-Flood era. No man other than these two can claim such a significant role of populating Earth, without

whom, the world would be barren.

2) Why are transmitters of the law essential? We can also ask why God gave the Torah to Moses in the manner He did, i.e., to pass it down, man to man. Why did God not give the Torah to each man individually? Perhaps this would convey a false notion that man is inherently entitled to the Torah. This is not so. Man must toil in Torah to uncover the truths. The more he toils, the deeper the wisdom he penetrates, "If you dig for it like silver, and search it out like a buried treasure, then you will understand the fear of G-d, and the knowledge of G-d will you find" (Proverbs, 2:4-5).

Perhaps, then, the very act of orchestrating a system of 'transmission' of the Torah, is to teach the very idea of how profound and deep the Torah is. But why is this idea so essential? Why must man know that Torah is so deep? It is because it reflects on its Creator, and teaches that God has infinite wisdom. Perhaps man's search for wisdom needs to be fueled by the idea that the Source of all Torah is infinitely wise. Only with this realization will man thrust himself into his learning, guaranteed by this concept that his mining for wisdom will always yield precious gems.

The relevance of the 930 years lived by Adam rides on the coattails of this concept: Adam's length of days teaches us that the wealth of knowledge in existence far exceeds man's lifetime. Were man to live a thousand years, he would still just scratch the surface of knowledge. By correlating Adam's years to the Tabernacle, we realize the amount of learning available far surpasses a man's lifespan - even one of Adam's age. It adds to our appreciation of God's infinite wisdom.

3) The Torah itself required highlighting. Just as in the Tabernacle, the focus was the Ark, which contained the broken tablets, and the Torah, so also the inaugural gifts must embody this concept. In all major areas of Torah, we will find that the Torah and wisdom in general take the spotlight. (See the article: The Ark's Poles)

According to Rashi these essential and primary concepts must inhere in the inauguration. The inauguration - the final commencement of the Torah system - required a focus on these primary goals of creation. The structure of the Tabernacle was not an end, but a means for achieving these goals. The one method for focusing on the goals was permeating the inaugural services with these concepts.

One point remains unanswered as indicated by the red "?:": What is the role of the atonement for the sale of Joseph? ■

RABBI BERNARD FOX

the Book of Ruth: A Lesson in Virtues

“And it was in the times that the judges judged that there was a famine in the land and a man from Bait Lechem in Yehuda went to sojourn in the fields of Moav – he and his wife and his two sons.” (Megilat Ruth 1:1)

One of the issues we encounter in teaching students TaNaCh is that the interpretations of our Sages often seem far removed from the literal translation and intent to the passages. It is important that the teacher relate these interpretations to the passage by explaining the basis for the insight within the wording of the passage.

The above passage introduces the Megilah of Ruth. The pasuk tells us the land of Israel was stricken with a famine. In response, Elimelech left the land of Israel with his family and relocated to the land of Moav. Malbim quotes the midrash that explains the there were actually two famines that afflicted the land of Israel. One was a famine involving a scarcity of foods. In addition, the land was also afflicted with a scarcity of Torah. The midrash does not elaborate on the specific form or nature of this scarcity of Torah. Neither does the midrash explain its basis for this interpretation of the passage. However, Malbim suggests that the nature of this scarcity of Torah is indicated by another teaching of the Sages. Based on his analysis, he also indicates the basis in the passage for our Sages' comments

Malbim begins by referring us to a comment of the Sages quoted by Rashi. According to our Sages, Elimelech was a wealthy person. As a result of the famine Elimelech was approached by many impoverished individuals needing his support. He fled the land of Israel in order to avoid his duty to support the poor. [1] At first glance, this seems to be another amazing comment that lacks any connection to the text. However, a careful analysis does provide significant support for these comments of our Sages.



Our passage describes Elimelech as “a man.” Only in the next passage does the Megilah reveal his identity. Like the Chumash, NaCh does not waste words. Ideas are expressed in as precise a manner as possible. So, we would have expected the Megilah to reveal Elimelech's identity in the first passage instead of referring to him as “a man.” The Sages often comment explain the term *eysh* – a man – usually refers to a person of importance. The Megilah is telling us that Elimelech was a person of significance.

Furthermore, the Megilah is referring to Elimelech as an *eysh* in describing his abandonment of the land of Israel. The implication is that

his decision to leave was in some manner associated with his status as a person of significance. What is the connection to which the pasuk alludes?

In order to answer this question, we must ask one further question. In what sense was Elimelech an *eysh* – a person of significance? How was he special? The only remarkable characteristic of Elimelech that is mentioned in the Megilah is his wealth. It seems that the Sages concluded that this must be the distinction to which the Megilah refers in describing Elimelech as an *eysh*.

Now, we can better understand the message communicated in the passage in relating Elimelech's decision to leave the land of Israel to his status as an *eysh*. The apparent message of the passage is that Elimelech's wealth was the basis for his decision to leave the land of Israel.

So, how did Elimelech's status as a wealthy person influence his decision to leave the land of Israel? Our Sages conclude that his decision must have been motivated by a desire to preserve this wealth. They continue to explain that as a result of the famine Elimelech was accosted by the poor seeking relief. Elimelech was not willing to provide this support but neither was he comfortable turning the poor away. In order to evade his dilemma, he elected to leave the land of Israel and relocate to the land of Moav.

Based on the comments of the Sages quoted by Rashi, Malbim explains that nature of the famine for Torah. He explains that this famine was characterized by this attitude towards *tzedakah* – charity – expressed by Elimelech. In other words, the reluctance to provide support for the poor is described by the Sages as a famine for Torah.

In summary, although at first glance it would appear that the comments of the Sages are not reflected in the passage, a careful analysis of the passage does indicate that the Sages are responding to specific problems in the passage and resolving these problems based upon a thorough analysis of the text.

Let us now consider another issue. Malbim continues to explain that this is not the only instance in which the Sages use very harsh terms to describe a person who is remiss in performance of the mitzvah of supporting the poor. Malbim quotes two statements of the Sages. The Sages comment that anyone who hides his eyes from the poor is regarded as serving idolatry. In another

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Weekly Parsha

instance, the Sages comment that anyone who does not involve oneself in acts of kindness is comparable to a person who has no G-d.

Malbim suggests that the Sages – like the TaNaCh – choose their words carefully. These two comments are not reiterations of the same idea. The subtle differences in the phrasing are significant. He quotes Rav Hai Gaon. Rav Hai explained that there is an important difference between hiding one's eyes from the poor and not involving oneself in acts of kindness. When one hides one's eyes, the person is attempting to not see something. In other words, there is a situation with which the person is confronted and the person turns away to avoid seeing and needing to respond to the situation. According to Rav Hai, this characterization describes the person that is confronted with a poor person – the poor person is knocking at his door – and he refuses to open the door or – like Elimelech – he flees from his responsibility. In contrast, in referring to a person who does not involve oneself in acts of kindness, the Sages are describing a different behavior. This person makes a decision to not get involved in acts of kindness. Perhaps, if a poor person came to the door, he would respond and provide assistance. But this person will not seek out the poor and those in need of help in order to provide for them.[2]

Although Malbim does not comment on the issue, it is interesting that the Sages refer to the person who hides his eyes as an idolater and the person who does not involve oneself in acts of kindness as not having a G-d. Can we explain the difference between these two characterizations and why each is used in reference to its respective behavior?

When a person turns away and avoids a needy person, a calculation is being made. The person is confronted with someone needing help and is aware of the obligation to respond. At the same time, that person is reluctant to give of his wealth. He balances his love for his wealth against his Torah obligation to support the poor and decides to ignore his obligation in favor of his attachment to his possessions. In this calculation, the person is giving precedence to his love for his wealth over his commitment to Hashem and His Torah. In deciding that the love of wealth comes first, the person has given his wealth a position in his outlook that is reserved for Hashem. He has placed love of wealth above love of Hashem. In assigning this position – reserved for Hashem – to his wealth – he has replaced Hashem with his wealth. In this sense, he is characterized as an idolater.

A person who does not involve oneself in acts of kindness is not making this calculation. In fact, through removing himself from involvement in acts of kindness – chesed – the person has avoided the necessity of any such calculation. However, this person is also making a clear statement regarding his relationship to Hashem. Who is this person? Our Sages accuse him of abandoning G-d because he does not perform chesed. The implication is that the Sages are referring to a person who is otherwise conscientious in his observance. But in the area of chesed he is remiss. He is establishing boundaries for his relationship with Hashem. He is establishing a realm or framework in which he must serve Hashem and defining a corresponding realm or framework in which duty to Hashem is irrelevant. This person is not denying that he must serve Hashem. Instead, he is establishing perimeters to this service. He relegates his service to the synagogue or the bait hamidrash – the study hall. But he banishes Hashem from important elements of his personal life. The message of our Sages now emerges more clearly. We cannot establish artificial boundaries designed to exclude Hashem from portions of our life. Devotion to Hashem – by definition – requires recognition of Hashem's mastery over all elements of a person's life.

An analogy will help convey this idea. Assume a king decrees that his subjects should pay a five-dollar tax every year. The subjects respond that although you are king, we do respect your right to demand taxes. You do not have authority over our possessions. Does this king truly have power over his subjects or does he rule only by virtue of the indulgence of his subjects? Clearly, he rules by virtue of their indulgence. They have the power to decide the areas over which he does and does not have authority.

Now, let us apply this analogy to our discussion. If we accept that Hashem has complete authority over us – that He is truly our G-d – then He does not need our indulgence in order to dictate behavioral expectations. We must acknowledge His authority in every aspect of our lives. However, if we insist that Hashem does not have the authority to prescribe behaviors in some areas, then we are implying that Hashem cannot dictate to us but instead rules through our indulgence. If Hashem requires our indulgence, then we do not really regard Him as our G-d. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Megillat Rut 1:1.

[2] Rav Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel (Malbim), Geza Yeshai – Commentary on Megillat Rut, 1:1.



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