

Naso - Rabbi Lerner - May 29, 2011

Parshas Sota

5:12: The beginning of parshas Sota comes right after the Torah discusses the topic of one who hides crops in order to give less Terumah to the Kohen. The Torah warns against people being stingy when it comes to giving to the Kohen. **Rashi**: Sota follows that section to teach that if you hold back from giving voluntarily to the Kohen, you will end up bringing your wife to the Kohen after she will be accused of adultery; if you don't go to the Kohen for one reason, you will end up going up to him for an entirely different, very unpleasant reason. **Oznayim LaTorah**: The person who holds back from the Kohen will become weak financially - if you distribute tzedakah the way Hashem expects and show trust in Hashem, then Hashem will make you wealthy. What causes strife in the home? Money is often the cause of internal family dissension - that is why she is upset at her husband and that is why she is looking for another man. The person who is cheap and doesn't give to the Kohen and is tight-fisted, will most likely be cheap with his wife as well and not buy her proper things she needs and desires, resulting in her straying. If he is generous to others, he will likely be generous with his wife.

5:12: *If his wife will deviate - Ki Siste Ishto.* **Rashi**: A person who goes all the way to committing adultery has to have the spirit of shtus, a very foolish idea that cause breakdown of the family. **Oznayim LaTorah**: This is a general statement for all sins - if you believe in God, it will take a spirit of shtus to commit any sin; so, why have this concept of shtus linked to this particular sin - why not one of the other sins of immorality? The Torah writes Ish Ish - the husband can be very handsome; the person we suspect carrying on the affair might be quite homely; normally, when you compare these two men, it would be inconceivable that she would be cheating on such a guy; we compare the two - Ish Ish. The husband sees his wife talking to this person and is suspicious; he has to formally put her on notice; he expresses his concern of jealousy and he has to first warn her in front of two witnesses not to be secluded with this man - there should be no Yichud with this man. After the warning, two witnesses come and say she did seclude herself; this then triggers the whole Sota ceremony; she is forbidden to her husband until the whole ceremony is completed. The guy he is worried about is nothing compared to the husband; one would think that she would never fool around with him; it is illogical. But that is the whole idea behind this concept of shtus; don't try to understand it, it is not logical; you must use this test in order to ascertain the truth; don't try to be logical by comparing the two men.

The Sota ceremony is a mitzvah, but obviously not something desirable; the Torah doesn't tell us to do this in an ideal world, but if the circumstances arise, then this ceremony is to be carried out correctly and it is a mitzvah. This is the situation as well with a Get, a divorce. **Ramban**: This is the only mitzvah of the Torah this is dependent upon a miracle; God's overt hand is necessary to determine whether she committed any infidelity. The name of Hashem is written on parchment, is then scraped off into the water she drinks; she dies immediately if she is guilty; she is blessed with beautiful children if she is innocent. Hashem, with his tremendous love of the people, wanted for us to keep on the right track; this sota ceremony was a very rare event in the holy society of Israel; Hashem wants to keep the people on a moral track and He intervenes to ferret out the evil people. This Sota ceremony would only happen when the whole society is holy. However, when most of the society was rotten and this wasn't an aberration, the miracle would not occur.

The purpose of this ceremony was to eliminate an evil influence from the society. **Meshech Chachmah:** in the Medrish Rabah it says that the Kohen brings her near to the mikdash not on a Yom Tov when there is the mitzvah of Aliyas Regel; she should not be brought up on the Chol Hamoed. It is forbidden to give the Sota the waters to drink on the Chol Hamoed. But, this is not the case - the **Rambam** says that during chol hamoed you can give the Sota the waters to drink? The real meaning of the medrish is that this is one of the most dangerous things that can harm the sanctity of the nation - this is supposed to be kedushin, the holiest of the actions we do. We would think with something this important that we would want to give it maximum publicity and have it done on one of the holidays when all of the nation is there - as is done with the execution of a zaken memrai, a Rabbi who goes against the Sanhedrin. So we would think we do that with a Sota as well; the medrish tells us that this issue needs to be resolved quickly, even on a regular day; she can be brought on a chol hamoed as well, but we don't wait for it.

Rav Yaacov Kaminetsky: why does the Torah spend so much time and pasukim on this topic? When a man gets suspicious of his wife, the suspicion will never be rooted out of his heart; the only way for him to be convinced that she is with him is if God would bear testimony to it. Normally we say that two witnesses are the best testimony; but here, not even a Navi can make him feel better about the situation. This is human nature; only by blotting out God's name will the man be convinced that she is innocent. This is the only way she can be tested; Hashem commands us to blot out his name to determine the truth. God Himself is giving testimony here. The foundation of this parsha is not that God wants to ferret out this woman as evil and publicize it; it is to establish beyond any shadow of a doubt the innocence of a woman. Hashem feels that the shalom bayis between husband and wife is so important, that in this one case He is willing to have His name blotted out; He wants to save the marriage of an innocent woman.

Rav Nissan Alpert: the most important thing about marriage is compromise to maintain peace; one must step back and be willing to reduce one's stubbornness to re-evaluate one's position. Hashem reduces Himself here by having His name blotted out; we must do the same in our relationship in a marriage; we should not be stubborn to maintain our position; we should always step back to rethink our position to maintain shalom bayis.

5:12-13: **Abarbanel:** In the husband's eyes she is deviating; according to his mind - he is highly suspicious and claiming she is sleeping with another; he has no proof and is jumping to conclusions; he has no trust in her. The Torah has to play along with this because God values every marriage, but she is not necessarily doing anything truly wrong.

Abarbanel: why use dirt from the ground to place in the waters? Firstly it is a sign of humility, that we are from the dirt and return to dirt in the end. But more important, this dirt is from the floor of the Bais Hamikdash where she is tested; this is the only situation where a possible criminal is brought to this place of kedushah; this is the place of the union of Hashem and the nation - the marriage between Hashem and the people was when He moved into the mishkan. This place represents the ultimate union; here they are creating a problem that undermines a holy marriage - that is why it says Ma'ale Ma'al - using something holy for mundane - her action is a betrayal of her husband and a betrayal of God who set the tone for holy relationships. That is why this is a sin of Me'ilah as well, of robbing the holiness from a sacred object - a holy marriage.