

Good Shabbos, everyone.

This week's Shabbos drasha is sponsored by Idie and Isser Goldsmith, in memory of Idie's mother Mrs. Rosa Roth, Miriam Rochel bas Yaakov, whose 11th yearzeit is this Shabbos, 14th of Sivan. May her neshama have an aliyah.

I want to thank all those, who despite their extremely busy schedules, produced and distributed such a beautiful Shavuot package to our members. It truly enhanced our Yom Tov, making us all feel connected, and helped us learn and celebrate together! Special thanks to Rikki Ambinder, Chanie Bernstein, Yael Schwartzenberger, Itzi Barr, Kenny Friedman, Avi Greenlinger, Rabbi Shmuel Iser, Chaim Wealcatch, and the many delivery volunteers who made this happen! Baruch Hashem, Shomrei has many, many hundreds of members, and this project was a **huge** undertaking. We are grateful to them for their dedication to our Shul! May this achdus and dedication continue in the weeks and months ahead!

On a sad note, this week the Jewish world lost Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm zt"l. He was the embodiment of "Torah Umadda," an eloquent spokesman for "centrist Orthodoxy," and most of all a genuine Tamid Chacham, a true scholar, and a passionate Jewish leader. I never met him personally, but he inspired me and had a profound impact on me through his many sefarim, his hundreds of insightful drashas, and everything he stood for and modeled in his life. Yehi zichro baruch. May his memory be a blessing.

And on a serious note, we, as Jews, must support the right to peaceful protest, and join in the quest to eradicate racism and the unfair treatment of all human beings. We, as Jews, understand what it is like to be hated and mistreated as a community. We join in denouncing racist attitudes and behavior, which should have no place in our country, a country that was built on the foundation of freedom, and liberty, and the belief that "all men are created equal." The brutal killing of George Floyd reminds us that while this country has made great strides, there is a long way to go towards making sure that all people are treated with dignity and that hatred and racism have no place in this country.

Eli Weisel famously taught: "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." We cannot stand by with apathy and indifference at this time. We must do our part to correct this problem.

But we may ask: how can we change such a pervasive and widespread problem, with such a long and deeply rooted history in our country? Can we really make a difference?

I believe our Sedra provides some insight into this matter. At the end of Parshas Naso, we are introduced to Birchas Kohanim. The Kohanim, the spiritual leaders of the nation, are given the responsibility of blessing the people; they are told to recite a bracha that is very familiar to us. It is traditionally also given to children on Friday nights, and to a chosson and kalla on their wedding day;

(כד) יברכך ה' וישמרך:

May Hashem bless and protect you

(כה) יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך:

May Hashem shine His face towards you and favor you
And finally--

(כו) ישא ה' פניו אליך וישם לך שלום:

May Hashem turn His face towards you and establish peace for you.

The **Rambam** writes in Hilchos Tefilla 15:7:

רמב"ם הלכות תפילה ונשיאת כפים פרק טו הלכה ז

ואל תתמה ותאמר ומה תועיל ברכת הדיוט זה, שאין קבול הברכה תלוי בכהנים אלא בהקדוש ברוך הוא שנאמר ושמך את שמי על בני ישראל ואני אברכם, הכהנים עושים מצותן שנצטוו בה והקב"ה ברחמיו מברך את ישראל כחפצו.

Do not ask; of what use is a bracha given by an ordinary person? Because the bracha's effectiveness is not really up to the Kohanim, it is God who issues real blessing...just the kohanim do their part, fulfilling what they were commanded to do, and Hashem in His mercy blesses the Jewish people, of His desire.

Rav Shaul Yisraeli, former Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz haRav, in his Sefer Siach Shaul, asks a question on the Rambam:

שיח שאול עמ' שס"ז

אולם גם אחרי ביאורו של הרמב"ם עדיין הענין דורש הסבר: אם עיקר הברכה אינה תלויה אלא בקב"ה והוא המברך את ישראל כחפצו, מה טיבה אפוא שלא המצוה שהכנהים נצטוו בה? הקצרה יד ה' מלהריק שפע ברכה על עמו מבילי תיווכו של הכהן? מה תתן ומה תוסיף ברכת הכהן, ברכת ההדיוט כביטוי של הרמב"ם, על ברכת השם?

If ultimately God is giving the bracha, what is the function and purpose of the Kohanim? Does God really need middlemen? What does the Kohen add in this process if Hashem is the one real source of bracha?

נעמוד על תוכן הדברים מתוך לשון הכתוב: "ושמו את שמי על בני ישראל", שענינו להקריא על ישראל את שם השם. חסד השם מלאה הארץ. שופע, זורם השפע האלקי בעולם ומלוואו, אולם זקוק הוא לכלים בבכדי לקבלו. ברכת ה' צריכה הכשרה בכדי לקבלה. והקראה זו של שם ה' על ישראל, שהיא הנה המצוה המוטלת על הכהנים, היא היא שצריכה להכשיר את ישראל לקבל את ברכת ה'...

Rav Yisraeli writes that their task is to remind the Jewish people that Hashem's glory fills the world, that the world is filled with Hashem's blessings. Hashem's blessings are always ready to flow, but they require a suitable recipient. To receive these blessings and to properly appreciate them, we need to prepare ourselves. That is the task of the Kohanim--to remind us to make ourselves suitable to accept the blessings...

And the Rambam is clear that not only Kohanim can help with this process of bringing Hashem's bracha into our world. He writes that this teaches us *מה תועיל ברכת הדיוט זה* that a bracha of **everyone**, even an ordinary person, should never be underestimated. They teach us that we must all do our part to fill the world with God's blessings. Even if our part seems insignificant, even if we feel ordinary and small, we can all do our part to fill the world with bracha. And it takes the cumulative effect of many ordinary brachos, by regular people, to help the world reach its ultimate perfected state.

We see this clearly in the final section of birkas kohanim—a request for **peace**, the ultimate in blessings. As the **Netziv** writes, without peace, all other blessings cannot be enjoyed.

העמק דבר במדבר פרק ו פסוק כו

וישם לך שלום. אחר כל הברכות, מברכים בכלי המחזיק אותם, שבלי שלום אין נחת בשום ברכה:

What kind of shalom, what kind of peace is being referred to?

The **Sifrei** quotes a dispute regarding what peace the Torah is discussing.

Rabbi Chanina Segan Hakohanim says it is talking about peace in our homes.

Rabbi Nosson says that this refers to days of Mashiach, when the entire world will acknowledge God's glory; when people will stop fighting, when everyone will live properly

While that goal may seem ambitious..., Rabbi Nosson is teaching us that **nothing is too big to dream of and pray for, and to work towards**. When setting our own goals and aspirations, **let us dream the noble vision: let us dream of peace for the whole world and in our own times. Just because something seems beyond us, at least right now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't set our sights on it. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be inspired to try**. We must strive for the larger aspects of peace — political, social, international — which will find their full realization at the end of days, the days of Mashiach. We need visions--grand visions, holy visions, and universal visions.

So why is Rabbi Chanina Segan ha-Kohanim arguing? Why does he limit the vision to peace in one's home? Why not dream bigger like Rabbi Nosson?

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm gives a profound answer in a 1976 drasha:

*“What R. Chanina Segan ha-Kohanim is telling us is this: dream the dreams of Isaiah, of nation not lifting up sword against nation; pray for the peace of the realm; **but don't be unrealistic**. Strive for these always — but without illusions as to their viability and applicability and realizability in the present or the immediate future.*

Insofar as now is concerned, ...refer to that aspect of the good life which can be attained and is within our grasp. The blessing of peace in the priestly blessings speaks of a peace which is much more realistic and attainable: שלום בביתך, peace in your homes. First you must strive for peace in your own home, between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brother and sister. Then you can strive for the larger aspects of peace — political, social, international — which will find their full realization at the end of days, the days of Mashiach.

World peace begins with peace in our homes...

As **Rav Hirsch** writes, we can all help bring world peace through our own small actions:

רש"ר הירש במדבר פרשת נשא פרק ו פסוק כו
וישמ לך שלום. . . אם תהיה עבד ה' כהלכה בכל כוחותיך הגופניים והרוחניים, ואם ה' יראה בך את הגשמת כל מטרותיו - כי אז כל בעלי הרגש והמחשבה שמסביבך יראו בך השלמה לעצמם; אליך ישאפו, ובך יראו את היסוד להווייתם; והעולם כולו ישיר שיר מזמור לאדם העובד את ה' באמת.

*... **If you will be a true servant of God with all your physical and spiritual powers, so that God will see in you the fulfillment of all His aims, then all those around you who are sensitive and thoughtful will consider you their perfect complement, the element that spurs them on to good endeavors and sustains them in existence. Every breath drawn by an individual who truly serves God will elicit a responsive chord from the universe around him.***

And this lesson is true when it comes to defeating the pernicious attitude of racism which unfortunately exists in our country. We must strive to eradicate it totally, we must have a vision of a world of tolerance and respect for all, but we must begin by making sure racism has no place in our homes, our schools, our Shuls, and our community. We must begin by ensuring that we never judge someone by the color of their skin or their religion. We must make sure that we never speak disparagingly of other cultures, races, and religions; that the tolerance we would like to be shown as Jews, we display for others as well.

And we can all do our part—to bring the proper respect and love for all of mankind, for all of God's creations, into our homes.

And little by little we can do our part to bring about the day that **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** dreamed of in his famous speech “I Have a Dream” in 1963:

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: “My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!

...And when this happens, and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: “Free at last! Free at last! Thank Great God Almighty, we are free at last!”

May we find the inspiration to dream big, and do our part in taking the necessary small steps to make those dreams come true, and may we be zoche to see the day when there will be true shalom... true tolerance and respect for all...world peace and harmony...when Hashem and His Glory, and the godliness within all of Hashem's creations is recognized by all...bimhera viyamenu...amen.