



FOR THE SAKE OF HARMONY

פרשת נשא



Over 75 *pesukim* in this week's *sedra* are devoted to the offerings which the *nesiyim* (leaders) of each shevet brought during the inauguration of the *Mishkon*. Since each tribe brought the same gifts, why was it necessary to repeat the same words 12 times? The Torah could have simply mentioned the offerings of one *shevet* followed by the words: "and so was done by each *shevet*." Since the Torah does not waste any letters or words there must be a very important lesson to be learned here.

The Chofetz Chaim quotes the *medrash* saying, that all the *shevatim* agreed to bring identical gifts so as to avoid any possibility of jealousy and envy. That possibility had already become reality years before, when *Hevel* brought a different *korbon* than *Kayin*. Hashem welcomed the *shevatim's* sensitivity to conform to one standard so he enumerated each of their gifts separately. Through this, Hashem emphasized the need to forgo one's individual preference at times in order to promote harmony. We especially see the emphasis that Hashem places on *shalom*, through our *parsha's* discussion of the *eishes sota*. Here a wife who is suspected of being unfaithful to her husband is required to drink a potion in which Hashem's name has been dissolved. Hashem thus, overlooks His Honor so as to determine the woman's possible innocence and thereby reinstate *shalom* in the home.

The *Mishna* says that Hashem could not find a more suitable vessel for *brocha* than *Shalom* – harmony. With peace comes *brocha*, without it, *brocha* eludes us. Rav Shimon Schwab זצ"ל, explained the concept of *Ayin Hara* (an "evil" eye) in the following way. Hashem does not want any individual blessing to create ripples of jealousy among others. Thus, when a person says, "*Beli Ayin Hara*", whether regarding children, health, or wealth, etc. he is asking that no one be jealous of his *brocha*. For if this happens, Hashem may discontinue His *brocha*.

In most Bais Yaakovs, for example, uniforms are worn to enforce *tznius* requirements and to minimize competition in dress. Those who say that this detracts from their individuality, must realize that ultimately this is determined through their **personality**.

A yeshiva *bachur* once responded to someone who criticized his "black and white" style of dressing. He explained that this was only his exterior look, and it does not relate to his individuality. He said, "Do you think I hang up my individuality each time I go to bed at night?"

There are times when *daas Torah* requires that the *halacha* be followed even at the expense of *shalom*. And there are other situations, such as the one which follows where harmony is the overriding consideration, pushing aside other concerns. Jessica* was living in L.A. and came from a "modern" family. She applied to a "modern" seminary, as well as to a more traditional one. Although Jessica was more observant than her family, her parents did not mind her applying to the second seminary since they were sure that she would not be accepted. You can imagine the excitement on Jessica's face when she was accepted to both seminaries. This is when the "battle of wills" began. She wanted to go to the more traditional seminary and her parents were adamantly opposed to it. "To add fuel to the fire," the teachers with whom she conferred were split in their opinion. There were those who said that she should hold her ground, and there were others who said she should give in. The amount of tension and discord which this created in the home cannot be imagined.

I was somewhat ambivalent, and did not express my opinion either way. Around the same time, I was scheduled to travel with a group of students to Eretz Yisroel, and I was hoping to discuss the situation with a *Gadol*. Once I arrived in Eretz Yisroel, I contacted my oldest son, who was learning in the Mir. He told me Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's davening routine so that we were able to meet him on his way to *Mincha* and escort him from his home to shul. He greeted us in his usual friendly manner, and I presented the issue, explaining to him the bitter tug-of-war which was currently waging between the child and her parents. He thought for a moment and then said that the struggle was not כדאי (worthwhile)- and she should therefore go to the seminary of her parents' choice. Weighing the pros and cons of each choice Rav Shlomo Zalman זצ"ל, apparently felt that, in this case the path of *shalom*, especially *shalom bayis* had greater merit.

*Fictitious Name

Welcome conformity for the sake of harmony; Express individuality by developing your personality

Point of Discussion

When did you find a situation that "shalom" pushed aside other considerations?