



Naso -Behalotcha



English version

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The Self Help Addict

There is an obvious question regarding Birkat Kohanim. If G-d wants to bless the people, why does He need to do so through the kohanim? Why does He need messengers? How could it be that a Gadol HaDor who is a Yisrael needs to be blessed by a Kohen who is a simpleton?

The answer is in the words of the Kohanim. May Hashem bless you and watch over you. The Kohanim are teaching us two things. They are telling us that we are blessed. And they are telling us that our blessings are from G-d. There is so much of G-d's blessing in our lives that we are not even taking notice of.

Recently, my mother sent me a chizuk quote. *Remember the days you prayed for the things you have now.* That is a great suggestion, because it really makes one realize that he *is* really blessed! We get so used to we have. We get so used to asking, wishing and praying for what we don't have. We get so used to wanting to be who we are not, and not just being thankful for and accepting who we actually are, that we forget about all the blessings we have. We forget that G-d loves us. We need to internalize that peace; we need to realize that we are blessed, that we are loved.

Our Rabbis teach that the best vessel to contain and retain beracha is shalom, peace. (Uktzin 3;12) In order to hold on to a beracha that you are given, you need to have a "container". Blessing is not a one-way street: the one being blessed must have -

or, more accurately *be* - a vessel that can contain the blessing. He must be at peace with himself. This is very deep, and can be very tricky. The reason why people don't access G-d's blessing in their lives is because when a person does not accept himself as he is, when one is not at peace with one's own self, when the inner voice says, "I don't like myself", "I do not like what I have" one cannot accept the blessing.

I have a relative who is anti-self-help. I used to think of them as "old-school", but this anti-self-help person is actually living a life of inner peace. She is not constantly busying herself with self-help. I never understood her. What could possibly be wrong with making an effort to be smarter, more successful, thinner, healthier, more productive, richer, and more satisfied with life? But recently, some new books came out with studies that the self-improvement industry can sometimes do more harm than good. They believe that many self-help people are setting up unrealistic expectations of themselves, which leads to bitter disappointment. Contrary to the message in Yaakov Shwekeys amazing song, "I Can Be", you can't be just anything you want to be. We have limitations, and all this is part of G-d's blessing.

Why be hard on yourself? Who says you are not OK the way you are, right now? Who says you are not blessed? Even working on self-acceptance is something that we need to question, if that is making a person feel that he is not ok. Even



working on self-acceptance is making inner noise that can be blocking out the words of the Kohanim, You are blessed.

Let me ask you a question. If we did not split the Kotel with a Mechitzah between the genders, but rather between the people who come to ask for what they lack and the people who come to express their thanks for what they got, which side would have more people on it? I'll bet it is the people who are coming to ask! Why is it like that?!!! Why are we like that?!! Because we have too much noise in our heads of what we want. And not enough echo of the words of the Kohanim, You are blessed.

The Birkat Kohanim is an introduction. It is an introduction to the downfall of our people in the upcoming Parashiot of Sefer Bamidbar. All of the problems begin when we don't realize that G-d is telling us, I love you. I bless you. You are blessed. There is a double meaning to the letters of the word Midbar. It means desert. But it also means that G-d is Medaber. In the desert, you can hear G-d talking to you, because G-d is heard only in silence. When there is silence, you can hear your mind think. And you can hear G-d's voice saying that you are blessed. But this sound can only be heard when you silence all other sounds. When you are in a desert, when you don't see anything, you do not want anything. You do not want to be anyone else.

After 8 years of writing on self-help concepts from the Torah, I realize that we need a balance of self-help and not an overdose. If you cannot shut off the self-help switch in your brain, it could be that it is hurting you more than it is helping you. Because self-help is something that is constructive only after you realize that you are blessed by G-d. Many people who are very effective in life, very happy in life, very successful in life, do not spend more than 20 minutes a day on Mussar and self-help.

Remember the days you prayed for the things you have now. The best way to help people who complain about their problems is to first ask them to count blessings, and then we can hear all about the problems. How many things are going right? Do you trust G-d that He has been taking care of

you all of your life, even when you were not able to take care of yourself? G-d does not need you to self-help. He helped you, even when you were not self-helping yourself.

People who are too busy with self-help are too often oblivious to the people in their lives. Sometimes self-help is just a way for a person to give himself a lot of attention, an expression of haughtiness. Humility dictates that instead of being busy with so much self-help, realize that there are people out there who can use your help.

Why do we need to live life with the mantra that I will be happy when...? Why can't we just be happy now? Isn't now the then of yesterday?! So, how much longer do we need to wait to feel blessed?

SELFIE STEPS to break away from Self Help Addiction and to contain G-d's blessings.

1. Write down all that you have in life. (This is something that Gedolim actually take out the time to do!) Enjoy the simple things. Be grateful for them.
2. Write down the names of all the people that you love in life. Make time for them. Accept them for who they are. Write them thank-you notes, even if you can't bring yourself to hand the note over. Even if you just read them out loud to yourself. When someone benefits you, say out loud, "Hey, so and so did something for me."
3. Stop the "I'll be happy when" thinking. And start remembering the day you prayed for the things you have today.
4. Become deeply engaged in work, family life or other activities, but don't multi-task. Become devoted to an institution or a cause greater than oneself. Pray with fire. Learn with an unquenchable thirst for G-d's word.
5. Write down the good years in your life, and why they were so good. When you

achieved, when you received, when you enjoyed, when you realized the truth.

6. Most of all, be present and focused during Birkat Kohanim.

HUMBLE POWER

Here is the sequence of events discussed towards the end of Parashat Bhaalotcha: The Jews complain to Moshe about their heaven-sent Mannah. They would rather have the natural produce from Egypt. They want meat. Moshe tells G-d, *“Kill me now; just don’t punish Your people!... I can’t carry the weight of this nation alone! I can never supply all the meat they want!... Even G-d can’t supply all the meat they want!”*

How strange for Moshe to ask G-d, at this point, to kill him instead of punishing the Nation, something he asked of G-d only at the sin of the Golden Calf! Also, why was Moshe saying that he could not help the people? Wasn’t he the ‘superman’ sent from G-d to bring on the 10 Plagues, take the Jews out of Egypt, split the sea, and bring the Torah down from the sky? Relative to these monumental achievements, bringing meat for the nation was not a miracle of such proportions that it would be hard for Moshe to ask it of G-d. And how strange for him to say that G-d can’t supply the nation with meat!!!

G-d responds that He will take away part of Moshe’s prophecy and give it to the seventy elders, so that they will have a share in prophecy. Moshe knows that 70 can’t be divided by 12, and he wanted an equal number for all 12 Tribes. So, Moshe took 6 from each tribe and wrote on only 70 out of 72 notes the word “Elder”. Ironically, Eldad and Medad, the two that were left out from the 70, ended up receiving prophecy, and their prophecy was something that shook the whole Jewish Nation to the core: “Moshe will die, and Yehoshua will bring the Nation into the Land of Israel!”

The two reasons that we know why Moshe needed to die and not bring the people into E Yisrael, were the following: A. When he was first sent to Pharaoh, and as a result, things only got worse, Moshe questioned G-d למה הרעות לעם הזה למה זה שלחתיני (see Rashi, Shemot 6;1 and see Siftei

Chachamim there) B. When Moshe struck the rock with his staff to get water, and lost the opportunity to bring about a higher level of Kiddush Hashem (Bamidbar 20;12). This prophecy of Moshe’s death, at this point, seems so out of place. Why did it need to come out right after the Jews complained about the Mannah?

And one more episode, before the Parasha concludes. Miriam spoke to her brother Aharon about Moshe, regarding Moshe’s separating from his wife, Tzipporah, and questioned if Moshe should be different from other prophets. Specifically at this point, the Torah says about Moshe, וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנָו מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה *And the man Moshe was more humble than all the men that were on the face of the earth.* Moshe’s humility is evident in so many places in the Torah. Why is it necessary to mention it at this specific place?

We opened with the complaining of the Jews. What were the Jews of the Desert complaining about? Such holy, wise, angelic men? They did not want to be so angelic!!! They did not want heaven-sent food, and to be so dependent on G-d! *After all, Moshe, I am here in the desert with a very large family, and the only food I can rely on is this Mannah! How irresponsible of me to be so dependent! In Egypt, I had normal food, natural food. I wasn’t so dependent on G-d, so irresponsible toward my family.*

An assault on the Manna was an assault on Moshe, in whose merit we have the Manna. Moshe was the most humble of men, in the sense that no one views himself dependent on G-d to the same degree that Moshe did. Moshe can get them Manna, dependency, but he can’t get them a feeling of security without G-d! Even G-d, no matter how much meat He would provide – if a person is looking for a feeling of security without G-d, there will never be enough. And, when someone wants

security, when he wants to manage without G-d, G-d doesn't help him. Instead, G-d says, "If you want to manage on your own, go ahead and try".

This is why at this point, the prophecy came out that Moshe would need to die and would not bring Klal Yisrael into E Yisrael. Because this is the point where *the Nation* lost their merit of having Moshe, a Man of Miracles, as their leader. "If you want to manage without miracles, if you want to fight without feeling total dependence in G-d, Yehushua will have to take you in. Not Moshe." Moshe's needing to die was a catalyst for the next Parasha, the story of the Jews' fear when they heard from the Spies how they had no hope of being victorious over the 7 nations in a natural manner.

Recent studies have shown that the best CEO's are the most humble. For years, philosophers and psychologists frowned on 'humility', saying that it showed character weakness. This is because the concept 'humility' is often misunderstood. Humility is defined in the Miriam Webster Dictionary as a modest or low view of one's own importance. For this reason, people have a misconception about humility, thinking that it means to regard yourself as a 'shmatteh'. R' Shach would say that this cannot be what humility is, because how, then, would we understand Moshe's teaching this passuk of Torah to the whole nation, expounding on how he was, is and will always be the most humble person ever?!?

The Orchot Tzaddikim tell us, clearly, what humility is and how to achieve it. At its root, real humility is recognizing one's complete dependence on G-d and acknowledging that all the good you have is not because you deserve it, but because G-d, in His everlasting kindness, wanted you to have it. The hardcore truth of humility is that we don't know where we are going in life, until we have one foot in the grave. We do not know if things will be better or worse, although we hope for the best, because we are totally dependent on G-d.

How humble you are, how undeserving you feel, or how dependent in G-d you feel, is evident from the way you respond when faced with disrespect. So many people feel like a Shmatteh when faced with insult, only because they feel that they *deserve* more respect, or they feel that they have importance, independent of G-d. They are just *surrendering* because they don't have any options, power, or courage to do anything about the given situation. That is being a Shmatteh; that is not being humble!

Of all people, Moshe felt the most obligated to G-d, the most underserving, the most dependent – and proof of it was revealed only now, when the closest person to him, his sister, Miriam, who saved his life, compared him to other prophets, and he did not respond, although he had the power to! Because he felt, "I do not deserve to be a prophet on a higher level than others; if G-d wants me to lose my level of prophecy, I will lose it, and the strengths that are G-d-given just make me more obligated to Him". This is how we can understand the sequence at the end of our Parasha.

We lost Moshe, because we did not want what he stood for! If we want miracles in life, we need to start feeling more dependent, more undeserving, and more obligated to G-d. G-d never forgets our original faith, our dependency in Him, following Him into the desert without any plan for survival. G-d remembered our Chessed with Him and did not annihilate us at the time of Exile in Yirimiyahu's days. **כֹּה אָמַר יְקֹנֵן זְכַרְתִּי לְךָ תְּסֻד נְעוּרַיִךְ אֶהְיֶה כְּלוּלְתֶיךָ לְכַתֵּם אֶחָדִי בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּאַרְצָךְ לֹא זְרוּעָה (Yirmiyahu Ch. 2)** He even refers to such faith as doing Chessed with G-d. What?! Does G-d need our Chessed?! Of course not! But if there is anything that we can do for G-d that even resembles chessed, it is to be dependent on Him, and on Him alone. (See *Homat Anach* from the Chida, *ibid.*)

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