

BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

PARSHAS NASO – 11 SIVAN 5781

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During the daily repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei in Chutz L'Aretz where Birkas Kohanim is not performed or in Eretz Yisroel when there are no Kohanim present, the Chazzan recites the Birkas Kohanim as a narrative with the introductory words, "...bless us with the triple blessing in the Torah that was written..."

Many advise making a deliberate pause after the words 'triple blessing' and so that the 'three' clearly modifies the word 'blessing' and not the phrase 'in the Torah'. However, even when the Chazzan reads this section in a way that makes it sound like "...bless us with the blessing that is written thrice in the Torah" it is possible to defend such a reading since Birkas Kohanim is referenced three times in the Torah.

The first mention is "Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them (Vayikra 9:22). Rashi cites Toras Kohanim that the blessing referred to here was none other than Birkas Kohanim. The second reference is explicitly in our Parsha, and the third reference is on the Pasuk, "...and to bless in His Name until this day" (Devarim 10:8). Once again Rashi informs us based on Erchin 11a that this blessing is Birkas Kohanim.

Parshas Naso features the Birkas Kohanim, the blessing bestowed by the Kohanim upon Klal Yisroel. The last blessing of the Shemonah Esrei as well as the last word of Birkas Kohanim focuses on Shalom. As Rashi explains on the blessings in Parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26:6), if there is no peace there is 'nothing', as all the other blessings are severely lacking in comparison. As we say begin the section of the blessings of Kriyas Shema at Shacharis, "Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech HaOlam, who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates all", indicating that Peace is equivalent to everything else.

During these difficult times, which is now being given the name Operation Shomer Chomos ('Border Guard' or 'Protector of Borders') and in the aftermath of the tragedy that occurred on Lag B'Omer this year, it is incumbent upon us to pray for Shalom שלום or 'Peace'. In order to daven for Shalom we have to understand better what Shalom means.

Rashi (to Shemos 29:22) explains that the term 'Peace Offering' or Korban Shelamim שלמים, comes from the idea of Shalem שלם or complete, because all parties involved get portions of the offering. The Mizbayach representing Hashem's portion, the Kohanim who do the Avodah get their portion, and the owner bringing the offering receives their designated portion. Thus, 'Peace' or שלום Shalom is created since all parties are content with their portion. No one feels left out or jealous of another party's portion.

In the section Raya Mihemna (Parshas Naso 145a), the Zohar explains that at the time the Kohanim are reciting Birkas Kohanim, the sixty letters of Birkas Kohanim hover in the Heavens and angels are appointed to each letter who all acknowledge these blessings, corresponding to the 600,000 souls of Yisroel that constantly exist in This World. The Kohanim are praised by both the Shechina above and the Shechina below, as it says, "Let them place My Name upon Bnei Yisroel and I will bless them" (Bamidbar 6:27). Once again, in these blessings of Peace, we see the importance of the completeness of Klal Yisroel, and roles that the Shechina, the Kohanim and rest of Yisroel all play together in this objective of completeness.

Clearly the blessing of Peace or Shalom is not simply 'the lack of war', rather it is a blessing of completeness. When disaster strikes and we intensify our Tefilos, Torah and Mitzvos, we are striving for 'completeness' and our challenge is to maintain these levels and strive further for 'completeness' when the danger inevitable passes, rather than becoming complacent and revert backwards in our spiritual progress when 'life returns to normal'.

Accordingly, whether in times of turmoil or in times of quiet, we must constantly keep in mind that true completeness can only exist when 'His name is complete and His Throne is complete' (see Rashi to Shemos 17:16) with the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash and the coming of the Go'el Tzedek, speedily in our days.