

Kindert Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Nasso

Your Greatness, Our Smallness

"Shalom Chaim, this is Yankie calling."
"Shalom Yankie. How are you?"
"Boruch Hashem, Chaim. I want to invite you to my house tonight. I just received a new telescope and I would like you to join me in looking at the stars, planets, and galaxies."
"Thank you Yankie. I would love to come. I also received a new gift – a microscope. May I bring it so that we can look at the wonders of the miniature world together?"
"That would be wonderful, Chaim. I'll see you at eight o'clock."

At eight o'clock sharp, Chaim knocks on Yankie's door.

"Shalom, Chaim! Come in. The telescope is all set up and ready to go. Boruch Hashem it is an exceptionally clear night. We can get a good look at the heavens."

And so, Yankie and Chaim gaze at the stars, planets, and galaxies. They are amazed by the wonders of Hashem's universe.

"Look at Saturn, Chaim, its rings are just awesome!"
"Each of the planets is unique, Yankie, with its own size and color. Let us look at the stars."
"They are beyond number, Chaim! Their multitude of sizes, brightness, and constellations testify to wisdom and power of the Creator. Finally, the galaxies – millions of light years distant – show the vastness of Hashem's universe and the unfathomable might that it takes to create and maintain such a world."
"I could not have said it better myself, Yankie."

Chaim and Yankie continue to gaze at the heavens, never ceasing to be amazed at Hashem's greatness.

"Come, Yankie, let us now look at the microscopic world."

Chaim and Yankie unpack the microscope, turn it on, and place a blade of grass under the lens.

"Wow! Look at that, Chaim! I see cells all laid in one next to another! Let us go to a higher magnification."

They switch to a lens that makes the object appear 100 times bigger.

"Each cell is so intricate! It has a nucleus, cell wall, mitochondria, and many other micro-structures!"

The two friends look at other leaves, insects, hair, and even skin. They see the same pattern – cells with similar configurations.

"What wisdom! The Creator of the uni-

verse designed and constructed all life on this earth with the same blueprint – cells interlocked together to form the myriads of plants and animals."

"This really makes me appreciate something that my father told me yesterday, Yankie. We were speaking about the thoughts that one must focus upon when he prepares himself to pray to Hashem. May father quoted the Rema in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 98:1 who says that before one begins to pray he should meditate upon the loftiness of Hashem and the lowliness of man. Let him remove from his heart the desire for the mundane pleasures of the world."

"The telescope and microscope have provided us with a complete lecture in the loftiness of Hashem, Chaim. His creations testify to His awesome might on a macro and micro scale."

"That is only the physical world, Yankie. We need only to look into the Torah, with all of its sublime and intricate wisdom woven into a beautiful pattern of Divine knowledge, to appreciate the other worldly intelligence of the all-wise and powerful Creator."

"Yes, Chaim, we certainly can contemplate Hashem's greatness. Then it is also easy to see our smallness. Who are we in comparison to the Almighty, who created and maintains this awesome world? Whatever strength, wealth, or intelligence that we think we possess pales in comparison to that of the King of kings. Moreover, even the small portion that we do have comes from Him. How small we are in comparison to His loftiness!"

"So true, Yankie. My father also added another thought to contemplate before tefillah. It is from Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l (Ohr Yechezkel – Emunah p.183). One should stand in prayer like a beggar standing at the door. He should ask Hashem to give him everything that he needs. He realizes that it is beyond his capabilities to acquire anything. Rather, he is entirely dependent upon Hashem."

"Perhaps we can sum it all up with the words of the Chovos Haleavos (Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh, 3:9). One must disengage himself from this world and free his mind of any thought that will distract his attention from prayer. One should seriously consider before Whom he stands, and should carefully choose both the words and the themes he intends to contemplate."

"May we all succeed!"
"Amen!"

Kindertlach . . .

Chaim and Yankie have given us the keys to prepare for tefillah. We should contemplate Hashem's vast greatness, and our relative smallness. This will make us realize who we are, and before Whom we are standing. We then proceed to remove any stray thoughts from our mind. All con-

templation of the physical world and its mundane pleasures are just not appropriate at such a moment. Lastly, in recognition of our total dependence upon the Provider of everything, we should stand before Him as a beggar at the door, humbly requesting Him to supply our needs. When prepare ourselves in this way, kindertlach, our tefillos will be different. With the Almighty's help, they will be received and all of our requests will be answered.

Self Control

"That's it! I've had it! I am fed up with my bad middos (character traits). I am going to do something about them. From this moment onward, I will never become angry again."

Avi's mother smiles warmly.

"That is very admirable, Avi dear. However, do you think it is really practical? A bad middah has become habitual. Bad habits do not vanish overnight. They take time to break."

"You're right, Imma. What shall I do? I want so badly to get rid of this anger."

"Take a tip from the nozir, Avi. The nozir took a vow to refrain from wine products, haircuts, and tomei mes (impurity from contact with a dead body). The Sforno (Bamidbar 6:2) explains that as a result of this, he was able to control his desires and break his habit of indulgence in worldly pleasures."

"Imma, there are so many worldly pleasures besides wine and haircuts. How would these small gestures help him?"

"Excellent question, Avi. The Sforno continues. The nozir should not go to an extreme by fasting and separating himself from the pleasures of eating completely. That would weaken his body, and he would not be able to serve Hashem. Rather, refraining from just wine will reduce his desires considerably, and leave him strong to serve The Creator."

"The nozir cut back a little and learned how to control himself. That gave him the strength to continue."

"Precisely, Avi. That is what you should do. Choose one half-hour of the day when you will not become angry. You can manage that. It will give you the skill and confidence you need to expand that time period. Pretty soon you will be calm, cool, and collected all day."

"B'ezrat Hashem, Imma."
"Amen, Avi."

Kindertlach . . .

Now is the time to learn to control yourselves. Develop good habits. Eat one less piece of candy. Wear those old shoes that are still in good condition. Eat Imma's dinner even if it is not your favorite food. Let someone go before you in line. Give up your comfortable seat on the bus. These are all small sacrifices. They lead to big things. Good middos. Don't be a slave to the pleasures of the world. Control yourself.

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