



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

Parshas Nasso 5768 פרשת נשא תשס"ח

JUSTICE PREVAILS

(Please note: Some of the material contained here may be somewhat striking for those with a natural tendency towards particular sensitivity. Nevertheless, we did not desist from presenting it, as its pertinence to the *parshah* coupled with the potency of its timely message seemed too opportune to pass up.)

MODERN-DAY MIRACLES

For some of us, when we hear about and contemplate some of the miracles that Hashem has wrought for the Jewish people in times past, we become wistful. Why can't we ever experience something comparable today? Wouldn't it be something to behold a modern-day Choni Hamagil (who could summon rain in immediate response to his prayers; *Ta'anis 22a*) or a type of event that could match the likes of Eliyahu at Har Carmel (*Melachim I ch. 18*)?

While the classical sources do go to great lengths to explain the apparent lack of overt miraculous activity in the modern era (and the topic is a bit too extensive to do it justice by attempting to deal with it here), the truth of the matter is, that we are not totally bereft from orchestrating wondrous acts, even today.

The Malbim (*Vayikra 19:2*) explains: Hashem chooses to run His world in a reciprocal fashion, based on the choices of His people. If people choose to follow their innate nature and desires, Hashem will likewise conduct the world according to natural processes (which usually don't turn out so well for the Jews, as thousands of years of persecution attest to). However, if instead of allowing nature to be the master over man's actions, he decides to elevate

himself over his natural desires, and rules over his whims, Hashem will likewise run the world in a supernatural, miraculous manner, circumventing the patterns of nature for man's benefit.

There are few accounts that so vividly portray the embodiment of this idea as the presiding of the holy Chida (R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai; d. 1806) over the case of a corrupt woman. In consonance with the Chida's extremely saintly qualities, it was clear to all that Hashem was intervening in a most miraculous way to protect the Chida's honor and assist him in arriving at swift and true justice.

The event is directly patterned after a subject in this week's *parshah*. The Torah (*Bamidbar 5:11-31*) details the laws and proceedings surrounding the treatment of the *Sotah* (wayward wife). After meeting certain conditions, a woman under suspicion was brought to the Bais Hamikdash to determine her guilt or innocence. Coupled with warnings and curses proclaimed to her by the officiating *Kohen*, she was made to drink special water which had absorbed the sanctified script of a scroll containing the Name of Hashem. If in fact guilty, she would become quite a spectacle in the eyes of the horrified onlookers. The Mishnah in *Sotah (3:4)* minces no words in portraying her ordeal:

אֵינָהּ מְסַפֶּקֶת לְשִׁתּוֹת עַד שֶׁפָּנְיָהּ מוֹרִיקוֹת וְעֵינֶיהָ בּוֹלְטוֹת וְהִיא מִתְמַלֵּאת גִּידִין.

“Before she even finished drinking, her face would turn a sickly green; her eyes would bulge; and her sinews would protrude from the swelling of her flesh.”

She would then proceed to meet a grisly end, as her abdomen would swell and her thigh would rupture (*Bamidbar 5:27*).

לע"נ הרב אברהם ב"ר אליעזר זצ"ל,
נפטר כ"ב סיון תשל"ב

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
אליעזר יוסף בן אהרן צבי ע"ה, a fellow Jew who passed away with no
relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his Neshamah.

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MISHNAS
CHAYIM

משנת חיים

פרשת נשא תשס"ח 5768

YET ANOTHER REASON WHY CHALLENGING RABBINIC AUTHORITY IS A BAD IDEA

And now we come to the 'main event' (as recorded by R. Chaim Kanievsky, in ch. 7 of his relatively short yet monumental compendium *Orchos Yosher*):

Towards the end of his illustrious career, the Chida served as the town elder. He was approached one day by an individual who was married to a woman who hailed from one of the prominent families of the city. Her behavior, unfortunately, did not match her prestigiousness. Her husband suspected her of the ultimate betrayal. In the presence of the other town judges, the Chida instructed the man to divorce his wife.

However, the Chida encountered resistance from the judges, many of whom were actually relatives of the accused woman. "Is this in fact the proper method of judgment?" they questioned. Sensing their ulterior motives for protesting, the Chida repeated his decision to the husband: "You must divorce her."

Seeing that the Chida was adamant, the other judges sought to protect their relative, as well as the respected reputation of their own extended family. Gathering their remaining relatives from throughout the town, they came storming against the Chida. Many of the town's most notable personages were counted amongst the angry assemblage of protesters.

Sensing that a pivotal moment had arrived, perceiving the need for immediate justice, and becoming infused with a spark of Divine guidance, the Chida knew that the time for action had arrived. He had the woman brought to his private study.

When the woman arrived, she beheld a sight which was most disconcerting to her. The Chida took a Sefer Torah, opened it up to Parshas Naso, and began reading before her the section dealing with the Sotah. Instead of a show of contrition or a plea for mercy, she turned her back on the venerated

elder, and started to leave. The Chida followed her, enunciating the curses recorded in the parshah which befall a guilty *Sotah*.

No sooner had she laid foot on the top step of the stairwell, then she suddenly froze, rooted to the spot. The woman's face had turned green, and her eyes began to bulge from the sockets. Responding to her shrieks of agony, her prominent judicial relatives came running, along with the rest of the townspeople. To their shock, the entire parshah of the Sotah played itself out before their very eyes.

Justice was served. In addition, an important lesson was driven home. Recognizing the true stature of the holy individual in their midst, the people accorded the Chida with the proper allegiance and respect from them on. As a testament to the awesome stature of their venerated leader, they paved that very step with gold. The monument was purportedly viewable up until the second World War.

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