

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בְּשִׁיטְיָחָה



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
NASO

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
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HONOR ABOVE ALL

At a total of one hundred and seventy-six *pesukim*, *Parshas Nasso* stands as the longest *parsha* in the Torah. The *parsha* doesn't cover more topics than other *parshiyos*, rather, the latter half of the *parsha* details the gifts the leader of each tribe brought to the *Mishkan*.¹

Had each gift been unique, perhaps one would have understood the Torah's purpose in reporting each and every contribution. But it quickly becomes apparent that each *nasi* brought the same exact gift as the preceding leader. This being so, why didn't the Torah simply describe the first gift and then add one more verse stating the others brought the same gift on their respective days?

The Ramban² (1194–1270) explains that the Torah specifically delineated the offering of each *nasi* so as to not shortchange the honor of any of these great people. Reb Chatzkel Levenstein³ (1885–1974) points out that had the Torah summarized the narrative, the information would have still been the same — generations would know how each *nasi* brought a gift to the *Mishkan*, and exactly what it contained. Nevertheless, it would have not been the same sort of recognition, and that slight difference was enough to spend about sixty-five more *pesukim* to make sure each person received the honor due to them.

Thus, though the Torah will spend a letter, or perhaps a whole word to teach an additional lesson in the intricacies of Shabbos, the laws of marriage, or the *halachos* of *kashrus*, we find sixty-five *pesukim* dedicated to instructing future generations on the importance of giving honor where honor is due!

As members of *Klal Yisrael*, our job is to follow in the ways of the Torah. If the Torah feels it is important to go the extra mile so as to not slight another, it would be expected that we should do the same.

1 *Bamidbar* 7:12-83

2 *Bamidbar* 7:2, s.v. ויקריבו נשיאי

3 *Ohr Yechezkel – Middos*, pg. 119

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is no simple task — giving anyone honor can be difficult to do, especially if one feels that they are debasing themselves in the process. Is there any strategy one can employ to inspire oneself to give others the proper respect they should enjoy?

Sometimes we can use our own desires and weaknesses to further our *avodas Hashem*. In this scenario, it is a common fallacy to think that by honoring another, we will suffer a loss of respect ourselves.

The truth is that the more we are nice, kind, care for others, and give them respect simply for their humanity, the more others are likely to hold us in high regard, and treat us in a similar fashion.¹

Thus, when one is nervous to serve another, we can tell ourselves that this is really for our own honor! Over time, that little voice will abate, and we will be comfortable respecting others without thoughts of recompense.

1 *Medrash Shmuel* on *Avos* 4:15, s.v. והחסיד ז"ל

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Much like a person cannot be called a person if they do not have a head, one cannot call wisdom, wisdom, if it does not contain Mussar - The Alter of Kelm, R' Simcha Zissel Ziv, quoting R' Yaakov Emden

EVERYONE IS THE BRISKER RAV

Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer* (1870–1953) was a renowned educator, *posek*, and *rosh yeshiva*. After emigrating to *Eretz Yisrael* from Belarus in 1925, he became the *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivas Etz Chaim, the *yeshiva* established by R' Shmuel Salant in 1841.

One day, a student who was staying in the house looked outside, and was surprised to see the Brisker Rav (R' Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, 1886–1959) walking towards the Meltzer house. “*Rebbi*,” the *talmid* called out, “the Brisker Rav is coming up the steps!”

R' Isser Zalman quickly grabbed his special Shabbos coat, and put it on to greet his illustrious guest. However, when he opened the door, it became clear that this was a case of mistaken identity. A man stood there with a striking resemblance to the great Brisker Rav, but was clearly not the same man.

However, to the students' surprise, Reb Isser Zalman continued with the same exuberance as if the Brisker Rav was actually there. He insisted the man come in and sit at the head of the table. Once the man was settled, R' Isser Zalman asked, “Please, what can I get for you? Perhaps you would like to have something to eat? Or perhaps a drink?”

Clearly uncomfortable, the man begged R' Isser Zalman, “Please, don't exert yourself for me! If the Rav would be so kind, I came for an approbation — I will soon be leaving *Eretz Yisrael*, as I am trying to marry off my daughter and need to collect the necessary funds.”

“Certainly!” R' Isser Zalman quickly fetched a pen and paper and wrote a beautiful approbation for the individual before him. Once the man was satisfied, R' Isser Zalman walked with him down the steps until they reached the street. R' Isser Zalman returned to his house, and faced a houseful of perplexed faces.

Understanding their confusion, he explained, “The reality is, every person, no matter who he or she is, is worthy of such respect. This is how our forefather *Avraham Avinu* acted towards his guests, and we really should act the same.

“However, we have become lax in this *mitzvah*. I have become lax in this *mitzvah*. But when events inspired me to act in the way that I should, should I not take the opportunity? That is why I treated this guest as if he truly were the Brisker Rav.

“And the truth is, who knows if he is as simple as he seemed — we have no way of truly knowing another's worth.”

*Adapted from *Hizharu B'Kavod Chavreichem*

DID YOU KNOW?

- There is a specific prohibition in the Torah regarding hurting someone else with one's words.¹
- By giving proper honor to one's guests, one is in fact giving honor to Hashem.²

¹ *Vayikrah* 25:17

² *Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Gemilus Chasadim*, Chap. 4

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