

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam*

## PARSHAT NASSO

### DVAR TORAH: 4 WHITE GARMENTS

The Arizal, had a custom, still kept by some mekubalim (Jewish mystics), of wearing four special white garments every Shabbat. The Shem Mishmuel (Rav Shmuel Bornshtein זצ"ל, of Sochotchov) explains this practice in his comments on this week's parshah about two differences between the Leviim and the Kohanim.

- The Avnei Nezer (his father, Rav Avraham, זצ"ל, the first Sochotchover Rebbe) asks: Why is it that Kohanim have special clothes, the בגדי כהונה, but Leviim do not? A Kohen is forbidden to serve without wearing בגדי כהונה, but we find no such requirement by Leviim.
- The Shem Mishmuel asks: The Leviim were divided up into those who sang – the משוררים – and those who guarded the gates of the Temple – the שוערים. Each Levi was locked in to a particular job; a singer was prohibited to function as a Temple guard, and a guard was prohibited to participate in the Leviim's singing in the Temple. The opposite is true for Kohanim – with the exception of the Kohein Gadol, all Kohanim were able to perform all of the priestly jobs in the Temple. Once again, why this difference between Kohanim and Leviim?

The Avnei Nezer explains that the Kohanim have the quality of פנימיות – their service is exceedingly inward and hidden. They therefore need special clothes that cover up and protect, just as everything inward needs to be specially covered up and protected. The Leviim, on the other hand, were more external. Their singing involves bringing out that which is hidden inside. They therefore had no need for special clothes.

Both Kohanim and Leviim keep watch to honor and guard the Beit Hamikdash, God's Temple in Jerusalem. But the Kohanim guarded "on the inside" and the Leviim "on the outside" (Sifrei Korach 1). Even though the place the Kohanim guarded was an area permitted to Leviim (see commentators on Rambam Hilchot Beit Habechirah 8:4), only the Kohanim were inside; the Leviim were to remain outside.

Inwardness brings unity. The more inward one is, the more unified he is with others – for separateness is only external but our soul, our internal aspect, is unified with others. The Kohanim, who excel in their inwardness, are all unified – all can fulfill all of the functions of Kehunah. All Kohanim are as one. This is not the case for the Leviim, who are more externally oriented. The Leviim were divided into singers and guards, and it was forbidden for a singer to guard or a guard to sing. But any Kohen could do any act of priestly service. They are as one, inwardly united.

Shabbat is a day of inwardness, of פנימיות. Therefore just as the Kohanim have special clothing, all Jews should have special Shabbat clothes, בגדי שבת. The Arizal's custom was to actually wear four white garments as the Kohanim did in the Temple. And because Shabbat is a day of inwardness, it is also a day of unity, as the Zohar says, Shabbat is the "ריא דאחד" the secret of oneness. Perhaps this is the reason why on Shabbat we greet each other with "Shabbat Shalom" – for Shalom, peace, is the ultimate unity.

## SOURCE GUIDE: LIKEABILITY

The middle line of the priestly blessing, **ברכת כהנים**, ends with the word **ויחנך**. According to the Midrash, this is a blessing to receive a quality called **חן**. A number of people in Tanach have this quality. This source guide asks: What is **חן** and how does one attain it?

### What is **חן**?

The middle blessing of **ברכת כהנים** ends with the word **ויחנך**:

<p>1. Bamidbar 6:24-26 (24) May Hashem bless you and protect you. (25) May Hashem shine His face upon you <b>ויחנך</b>. (26) May Hashem lift up His face towards you and grant you peace.</p>	<p>במדבר ו: כד-כו (כד) וְיִשְׁמְרְךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרְךָ ה' (כה) יָאֵר ה' פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִחַנְךָ ה' (כו) יִשָּׂא ה' פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשְׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:</p>
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Rashi explains the word **ויחנך**:

<p>2. Rashi on Bamidbar 6:24-26 He will give you <b>חן</b>.</p>	<p>רש"י במדבר ו: כה יתן לך חן.</p>
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What is **חן**? The Vilna Gaon explains the word in his commentary on Mishlei:

<p>3. Gra's Commentary on Mishlei 3:4 <b>חן</b> (favor) is related to the word <b>חנם</b>, something one receives for free. Therefore it always appears in conjunction with "finding," as in the common expression "If I find <b>חן</b> (favor)." <b>שכל</b> is success, that He will make your way successful. That is, in the merit of lovingkindness (spoken about in the previous verse), giving to others without expecting return, you will find favor, a gift given without expectation of return.</p>	<p>ביאור הגר"א על משלי ג:ד וּמְצָא חֵן וְשָׂלָל טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם - חֵן הוּא מִלְשׁוֹן חֲנָם, לְכֵן כְּתִיב תָּמִיד אֲצֵל חֵן מְצִיָּאָה: "אִם מְצִיָּאתִי חֵן." וְשָׂלָל הוּא הַצְלָחָה שִׁיְצַלִּיחַ דְּרֹכֶיךָ. וְהֵינּוּ, בְּשֹׂכֵר חֲסֵד שֶׁהוּא מִתְּנוּת חֲנָם תְּמַצָּא ג' כִּי חֵן שֶׁהוּא מִתְּנוּת חֲנָם.</p>
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Based on this, **חן** is related to the word **חנון**, as Rashi says in the beginning of **פרשת ואתחנן**.

<p>4. Rashi on Devarim 3:23 Vaetchanan – Wherever the word <b>חנון</b> is used (like, here, when Moshe says <b>ואתחנן</b>) it indicates a free gift. Even though the righteous could pray expecting to be rewarded for their good deeds, they instead only request a free gift from God, as it says, "I will favor the one I favor." Therefore Moshe requested using the expression <b>ואתחנן</b>.</p>	<p>רש"י על דברים ג: כג וְאֶתְחַנֵּן - אֵין חֲנוּן בְּכָל מְקוֹם אֲלֵא לְשׁוֹן מִתְּנוּת חֲנָם אַע"פ שִׁישׁ לֵהֶם לְצַדִּיקִים לְחֹלוֹת בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם הַטּוֹבִים אֵין מִבְּקָשִׁים מֵאֵת הַמְּקוֹם אֲלֵא מִתְּנוּת חֲנָם לְפִי שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ וְחֲנוּתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹזֵן אֲמַר לוֹ בְּלִשׁוֹן וְאֶתְחַנֵּן.</p>
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[Note that Rabbi Eliahu Mizrahi (1450-1525, Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire), commenting on that Rashi, distinguishes between **חן**, meaning love and closeness, and **חנון**, meaning a free gift. But a group of other commentators argue with his position.]

One way of understanding the blessing **ויחנך** according to Rashi is that God will show you favor even though you do not necessarily deserve it. This is backed up by a Midrash:

<p>5. Sifrei Naso 41 He will show favor to you – through a free gift. Thus the verse says, "Behold, as the eyes of servants are to the hand of their masters and as the eyes of a maidservant to her mistress, so are our eyes to Hashem our God until He shows us favor" (Tehillim 123:2).</p>	<p>ספרי פרשת נשא פִּיסקָא מֵא וִיחַוְנְךָ - בְּמִתְּנוּת חֲנָם. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר, "הִנֵּה כְּעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֵל יָד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם וְכְעֵינֵי שִׁפְחָה אֵל יָד גְּבִירָתָהּ כֵּן עֵינֵינוּ אֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שִׁיחַוְנֵנוּ" (תהלים קכג:ב).</p>
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Another passage in the Midrash offers a second meaning of **ויחנך** (Rashi might include both meanings):

<p>6. Sifrei Naso 41 He will grant that you find favor in people's eyes. Thus it says, "God was with Yosef and stretched out lovingkindness towards him, and his favor was in the eyes of the prison warden" (Bereishit 39:21). "Esther would find favor in the eyes of everyone who saw her" (Esther 2:15). And it also says, "God granted Daniel favor, lovingkindness, and mercy [before the chief officer]" (Daniel 1:9). It also says, "He will find favor and success in the eyes of God and man" (Mishlei 3:4).</p>	<p>ספרי פרשת נשא פסקא מא יתן חנן בעיני הבריות וכן הוא אומר "ויהי ה' את יוסף ויט אליו חסד ויתן חנו בעיני שר בית הסוהר" (בראשית ל ט: כא). "ותהי אסתר נושאת חן בעיני כל רואיה" (אסתר ב: טו). ואומר "ויתן האלהים את דניאל לחן ולחסד ולרחמים" (דניאל א: ט). ואומר "ומצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלהים ואדם" (משלי ג: ד).</p>
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חן could also be translated as likeability. Not only will God shine His face upon you and show you favor; He will grant that you will find favor in other people's eyes. You will be blessed with likeability.

### How Does One Attain חן?

Based on the above, the way to attain this quality of חן, likeability, the ability to find favor in others' eyes, is to simply receive the Divine blessing. חן seems to be a quality you either receive – like Esther, Yosef, and Daniel – or you just don't.

But the book of Mishlei teaches us that there are ways to open ourselves up to the blessing of חן, likeability. One is through Torah:

<p>7. Mishlei 1:8-9 (8) Listen, my son, to the instruction of your father, and do not desert the teaching (Torah) of your mother. (9) For they are a graceful (based on חן) accompaniment to your head, and a necklace around your neck.</p>	<p>משלי א: ח-ט (ח) שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטש תורת אפך: (ט) פי לנית חן הם לראשך וענקים לגרגרותיך.</p>
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This expression, repeated with slight variation in Mishlei 4:9, is included in a string of verses extolling the greatness of Torah in Pirkei Avot 6:7. Connecting with God through His Torah leaves its mark. We become elevated individuals with special qualities. The Torah – when learned in the proper way by a person who has prepared his character for Torah – creates a type of spiritual charisma that makes the person, in the words of Pirkei Avot 6:1, both loving and beloved.

Another path to opening up to חן is through humility:

<p>8. Mishlei 3:24 (34) If one joins the scoffers, he will scoff, but if one joins the humble He will give favor.</p>	<p>משלי ג: לד (לד) אם ללצים הוא יליץ ולענווים יִתֵּן חֵן.</p>
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This translation follows Rashi's interpretation of the verse. Rashi adds:

<p>9. Rashi on Mishlei 3:24 If he joins up with humble people his acts will find favor in people's eyes.</p>	<p>רש"י על משלי ג: לד אם לענווים יתחבר סוף שיתנו מעשיו חן בעיניהם של בריות.</p>
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The Vilna Gaon takes a different direction, and would translate the verse as follows: "As for scoffers, He will scoff at them, but for the humble He will grant favor."

<p>10. Vilna Gaon on Mishlei 3:24 The humble – who hear their scorn and do not insult in return, and humble themselves before any man in the world – the Holy One, blessed be He will grant him favor in people's eyes.</p>	<p>ביאור הגר"א על משלי ג: לד ולענווים – שומעין חרפתן ואין משיבין ומכניעין את עצמן לכל אדם בעולם – יתן חן – יתן הקב"ה לו חן בעיני הבריות.</p>
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There is also a natural reason for humility to bring about חן: humble people are so less threatening, so less likely to get into conflicts, so much happier, and therefore so much more likeable.

## OUR BRIDE, HIS BRIDE BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

Two cardinal events mark the story of the Children of Israel in the desert in the months following the exodus from Egypt. After forty-nine days of anticipation, the Torah was given on Mount Sinai on the sixth of Sivan. And a little less than a year later, on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, was erected.

The narratives of these events are linked by a common word, כלות – literally, completion. Rashi cites similar midrashim both times the word כלות is used: similar, but different.

Parshat Ki Tissa (Shemot 31:18): "ויתן אל משה ככלתו", "God gave the Torah ככלתו (literally, when He finished [speaking with Moshe on the mountain])," says Rashi, like a bride, like a כלה. The Torah was given to Moshe as a bride is given to her husband. Moshe, and, by extension, Israel, are husbands to the bride, the Torah.

Parshat Naso (Bamidbar 7:1): "ויהי ביום כלות משה להקים את המשכן", "On the day Moshe was כלות (literally, completed) erecting the Mishkan." Says Rashi, "Israel was like a כלה a bride entering the chuppah." Israel the bride and, as it were – כביכול – the Holy Shechinah the husband.

On Shavuot we became husbands, on the following Rosh Chodesh Nisan brides.

Though it is true that in real life husbands and wives must give to and receive from each other, in Torah terminology the word husband symbolizes giving. It connotes reaching into one's own intellectual and spiritual resources in order to bestow blessing and שפע on another. On the other hand, the כלה, the wife, represents the idea of receiving the blessing which emanates from its source.

Ultimately the goal of Creation is for mankind to experience the pure pleasure of basking in the glow of Divine blessing, to be a bride to God, the one who bestows the שפע. And the Mishkan experience is but the precursor of that ultimate blissful state. But we need Torah to achieve that goal. And to have Torah means to take Torah as a bride. The Torah is beautiful. The Torah is sweet. But the Torah needs us to actively be involved in eliciting its secrets.

The Torah, of course, is unchanging, but it is also packed with meanings and nuances which must be brought to the surface. And within the parameters of tradition every Jew has something to contribute.

We have just experienced Shavuot, striving to receive Torah as our bride. May we in turn be received by Hashem as His bride.

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the married couples' programme and the Pathways Israel and Pathways Plus programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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