

Give Of Yourself to the Other

Dr. Jesse Hefter – Shabbat Naso 5786 (May 30, 2026)

Aufruf Shabbat for Daniel Hefter, Pittsburgh, PA

When an aircraft is forced to drop its oxygen masks from below the overhead storage bins, the flight attendants always direct passengers to put their own mask on first before assisting another passenger. Why is this? The answer is simple. Once oxygen flows into your lungs, your head is clear, your eyes are focused, and you can turn your full attention and energy to the other.

For decades, I have remarked to my Daf Yomi students that literally everything is in the Torah. This week's sidra of Naso underscores this point. Hashem tells Moshe Rabeynu in Bemidbar, Perek 6, Pasuk 23:

דִּבֶּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה תְבָרְכוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמֹר לָהֶם:

“Speak to Aharon and his sons: Like thus shall you give a Bracha to the Children of Israel; Say to them:”

The commentaries ask why the Torah first instructs the Kohanim to **ble**ss us and then to **te**ll them. One of the verbs would have been sufficient. Answers the Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschintz [1550-1619]):

“Our Rabbis learned (Sifrei 6:143 – A 3rd century Midrashic commentary of Sefer Bemidbar) from this double verb use that the Baal Tefillah, as we do to this day, leads the Birchat Kohanim word by word. The reason is that the Kohanim first receive the Bracha from HaShem, who is the source of all Berachot, and pours them upon the heads of the Kohanim.

The first word ‘ברוך’ Yevarechecha’ fills the empty cup of Blessings of the Kohen, and then the Kohen, in turn, pours the Berachot for that specific word of the Beracha into the empty cups of the Kehillah. If the Kohen had but an empty cup of Beracha, what would they transfer to the congregation?”

And perhaps that is the deeper meaning of Birchat Kohanim itself. The Kohen is not a pipeline but rather a vessel. Before he can raise his hands to bless Klal Yisrael, he must first allow himself to be filled with the presence of Hashem. Only then can the blessing overflow outward.

The same is true in marriage, parenting, friendship, and every act of Chesed. We sometimes think that giving means emptying ourselves for another person. But the

Torah teaches otherwise. A person who is spiritually depleted, emotionally distracted, or disconnected cannot fully give. First, we breathe in. First, we reconnect ourselves to the Source of Bracha. And then, with clarity, calmness, and fullness of heart, we can truly be there for someone else.

Like the oxygen mask on the airplane, the Torah reminds us that taking in that breath is not selfishness — it is responsibility. Because when a person is filled with Torah, with Emunah, with presence, and with love, then the blessings we give to others are no longer forced words. They become real Berachah.

Mazel Tov, Daniel and Orly!