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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

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THINK TWICE...AND THEN THINK AGAIN!

PARSHAS TAZRIA

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l (1849 – 1932) was the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of Yerushalayim. He was very involved in communal activities, such as the founding of schools and an orphanage. He was also the rav of shul. A man named Nachman was the chazan in Rabbi Sonnenfeld's shul for Musaf on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. One year, a few weeks before Rosh Hashana, Nachman passed away. After shiva, some of the elders of the shul asked Rabbi Sonnenfeld whom to get to replace Nachman. Rabbi Sonnenfeld told them not to worry. He would find someone. A few days before Rosh Hashana, the elders approached Rabbi Sonnenfeld again, since the replacement chazan had not yet been announced. Again, Rabbi Sonnenfeld told them not to worry.

The day of Rosh Hashana came. Shacharis was over. It was time for Musaf. No one in the shul knew who the chazan would be. Suddenly, Rabbi Sonnenfeld rose from his seat and walked over to Nachman's adult son. Rabbi Sonnenfeld told him, "You will be the chazan. Go daven Musaf just as your late father did." The young man was speechless. He hadn't even prepared. Rabbi Sonnenfeld told him, "You have heard your late father daven for many years. You are familiar with his manner of davening. You will be fine." The young man got up and led Musaf. After Musaf was over, a group of people went to Rabbi Sonnenfeld to ask why he had permitted a mourner to lead the Tefillah, as it was customary not to have a mourner lead the Tefillah on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Rabbi Sonnenfeld's answer should be a lesson for us all. He told them that Nachman's widow was in shul. "Imagine the grief and sorrow that she is feeling, especially on the day that her husband would have been the one to lead us in Musaf. Imagine the pain she would have felt if someone else would have led

When the days of her purification are completed, be it for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb, in its first year, as a burnt-offering and a young dove or a turtledove as a sin-offering, to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, to the kohen" (Vayikra 12:6)

the Tefillah." Rabbi Sonnenfeld did not want to cause pain to a widow, so he chose the best possible replacement for her late husband, namely her own son. He felt that under the circumstances there was no one else who could have led the Tefillah. That is why he let a

mourner lead it. (Around the Maggid's Table by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)

Rabbi Sonnenfeld's actions displayed thoughtfulness and sensitivity for another person.

After giving birth, a woman purifies herself by bringing *korbanos*, sacrifices. She brings both a lamb and either a young dove or a turtledove. The commentaries point out that in other instances where young doves and turtledoves were brought as *korbanos*, the Torah mentions turtledoves first, before it mentions young doves. Why does the Torah change the order in this instance?

The **Sifra** says that this teaches us that both birds are equivalent. One is just as good as the other. In a similar vein, the **Midrash** (Bereishis Rabbah 1:15)

says that throughout the Torah, Moshe is mentioned before Aharon. Yet, in one place the Torah says: “It is Aharon and Moshe” (Exodus 6:26). This teaches that both are equal in importance to one another. Similarly, Yehoshua is usually mentioned before Calev. Twice the Torah mentions Calev first. “Except for Calev, son of Yefuneh, the Kenizi and Yehoshua, son of Nun” (Bamidbar 14:30, Bamidbar 32:12). This teaches that both are equal in importance to one another. The **Midrash** continues that throughout the Torah, turtledoves are mentioned before young doves. In one place it says: “And a young dove or a turtledove as a sin offering” (Vayikra 12:6). This tells you that both are equal in importance to one another.

[Ba'al HaTurim](#) gives a different answer. Throughout the Torah, young doves are mentioned first because

the doves were sacrificed in pairs. The *korban* brought by the woman who just gave birth is the only instance in which only one bird is sacrificed. Thus, the Torah is recommending that we first try to get a young dove for this *korban* since the remaining young dove will be able to find another mate. The turtledove, however, is loyal to its mate and will never mate with another. It will forever grieve the loss of its mate.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand ([Rabbi Frand on the Parsha 3](#)) quotes **R' Simcha Zissel Ziv Brodie** zt”l, the **Alter of Kelm**, who learns a beautiful lesson from this [Ba'al HaTurim](#). We see the Torah’s sensitivity towards the turtledove. The Torah is concerned about the grief of a bird. Certainly, Hashem is even more concerned about the feelings of a person!

We can learn a lesson from Hashem. We, too, must be sensitive to the feelings of others!

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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