

MESHECH CHOCHMAH

Parshas Naso

The Nazir

כל ימי נזרו קדש הוא לה'

All the days of his nezirus he is holy to Hashem (6:8)

THE GOAL OF NEZIRUS

One of the mitzvos discussed in our Parsha is Nazir, the person who abstains from certain activities in order to distance himself from sin and attain a higher level of closeness to Hashem. Indeed, says the Meshech Chochmah, since this is the goal of *nezirus*, the Torah does not explicitly state how long the term should last. While we have an oral tradition from Sinai that the standard term unless otherwise specified is thirty days, nonetheless, the Torah does not wish to state it in the pasuk.¹ This is in order to emphasize that, the default term notwithstanding, the essential duration of the *nezirus* is as long as the person gauges that he needs to abstain in order to subdue his *yetzer hara*.

DEMANDS OF THE CROWN

Our pasuk informs us that during his term of abstinence, the nazir – as a person – is considered holy. The pesukim that follow² outline the responsibility which comes with his elevated status:

וכי ימות מת עליו בפתע פתאם וטמא ראש נזרו... וביום השמיני יבא שתי תורים... ועשה הכהן אחד לחטאת ואחד לעלה וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש... והימים הראשונים יפלו כי טמא נזרו.

If a person should die near him unexpectedly and suddenly and contaminate his head of nezirus... On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves... The Kohen shall make one as a sin-offering and one as a burnt-offering, and he shall atone for him for having sinned regarding a soul... And the first days shall fall away, for his nezirus is contaminated.

The pasuk explicitly describes a situation where someone died in the proximity of the

¹ The Gemara (Nazir 5a) states that the default duration of thirty days can be derived from the word "יהיה" in pasuk 5, whose numerical value equals thirty. The Rambam, in his Commentary to Mishnayos Nazir (1:3) writes that the duration of thirty days is something that was known to Chazal through tradition, with the Gematria exposition of the word יהיה serving as a memory aid.

² 9-12.

nazir (thereby transmitting tumah to him) in a manner which he could not have foreseen – and hence, *could not have avoided*. Nevertheless, the Torah states that he needs to begin his *nezirus* again, and moreover, he must bring a sin-offering for “having sinned regarding a soul.” The question is: If he has, in fact, done nothing wrong, then regarding whose soul has he sinned?

The answer, says the Meshech Chochmah, is that he has sinned regarding the soul of the one who died.

The increase in sanctity which accompanies the acceptance of *nezirus* is expected to impact not only the person himself, but also his surroundings. In this respect, he is analogous to the Kohen Gadol. Indeed, the Torah uses the same expression in connection with both these individuals “גִּזְרֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל רִאשֵׁנוּ” – The crown of his God is on his head.”³

As we know, the release of an accidental killer from a city of refuge is effected by the death of the Kohen Gadol.⁴ This implies that he is somehow connected to the accident which caused the killer to have to flee there. The Gemara⁵ explains that this is because the Kohen Gadol, in keeping with his elevated status, should have prayed that no such accidents occur among the Jewish people! So, too, with regards to the nazir. If someone dies in his proximity, he – as a nazir – must bear some of the responsibility, for perhaps he could have helped prevent it. Hence, he brings a sin offering and requires atonement for having sinned regarding the soul of that person.

THE DAY OF COMPLETION – BRINGING THE NAZIR

Upon successfully completing his term of *nezirus*, the Torah requires the nazir to bring certain korbanos before returning to normal life. The section dealing with these korbanos is introduced by pasuk 13:

וְזֹאת תֹּרַת הַנָּזִיר בְּיוֹם מְלֵאת יָמֵי נִזְרוֹ יָבִיא אֹתוֹ אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

This is the law of the nazir, on the day his nezirus is completed, he shall bring himself to the entrance of the Ohel Moed.

The words “יָבִיא אֹתוֹ” in this pasuk are somewhat unusual. The more intuitive way to say “he shall bring himself,” would be “יָבִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ,” or perhaps, even more simply, “יָבֵא – he shall come.” After all, does not everyone who comes to any given place “bring themselves” there?⁶ By phrasing it as it does, the Torah almost makes it sound as if *someone else* is bringing him. Why?

The answer of the Meshech Chochmah is as striking in *parshanut* as it is profound in message. It is characteristic of the temptations and pitfalls from which the nazir wishes to protect himself that they cloud a person’s perspective in terms of how he views himself and his conduct. Actions and attitudes which he would instantly condemn as reprehensible were he to witness them in someone else somehow get a pass when he himself does them. As long as he is caught up in his desires, he is blind to his faults and flaws. As the nazir withdraws from the commotion of life and develops himself in terms

3 Vayikra 21:12, Bamidbar 6:7.

4 See Bamidbar 35:25.

5 Makkos 11a.

6 See Rashi s.v. yavi, citing the Sifrei (sec. 32).

of his actions, he should also be developing the ability to view his own actions with the same objectivity that he views those of others. As such, the hallmark of a successful term of *nezirus* is most strikingly portrayed in our pasuk: “He shall bring him.” This phraseology would seem appropriate if one person was bringing another – and that is the point. The nazir is expected to reach a stage where he can “bring himself”, i.e. present himself, with the same objectivity as if he was bringing someone else!

Indeed, once he has achieved this level of objectivity, it is no longer desirable for him to be a nazir. In the words of the Meshech Chochmah, *nezirus* is like medicine for someone who is being dominated by his desires and self-absorption, and medicine is not the basis of a steady diet. Once his objectivity has been restored, he is then encouraged to resume normal life, partake of the pleasures of this world in a healthy way and interact meaningfully with society.

In identifying objectivity and self-knowledge as primary goals of *nezirus*, the Meshech Chochmah opens up the theme of this mitzvah well beyond the context of a person who becomes a nazir. The very fact that the Torah provides such a strict regimen for an individual who wishes to withdraw from society in order to pursue these qualities should certainly identify them as most worthy goals for those within society itself, encouraging them to aspire to always see themselves with the same clarity with which they see others.