



Partners In Torah

San Diego-Los Angeles

Study Guide

תשפ"ג נסו

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Partners Detroit

5/30/2023

Partners In Torah

Mission Statement:

Partners In Torah is a community-wide,
independent and inclusive adult education program
focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by
studying text most interesting to each participant.

Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week,
friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.

*Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming
the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for
many who have, until now, lacked access.*

Welcome.

Thank you for coming!

**Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that
we may grow together as a community.**

We all know the story of Samson (Shimshon) and Delila, how she extracted from him that the secret of his strength lay in his hair. Indeed, when the Philistines cut his hair, his strength subsided and they subdued and blinded him.

What was it about his hair that upon having it cut Samson lost his power? The answer is that Shimshon was a *Nazir*, the intricate laws of which are presented in this week's parsha.

English has no translation for the word Nazir because no such concept exists outside of the Torah. The Sages, however, explain the word's etymology from two sources in scripture that paint the picture of a Nazir for us.

As a verb (Leviticus 22:2), *nazir* means *to separate oneself from*, and as a noun (Exodus 29:6) it means a *crown*. A Nazir is one who wishes to elevate his level of holiness and come closer to Hashem by separating himself from certain permitted pleasures. In turn, he is "crowned" like a king as one who has decided to "reign" over his earthly desires by abstaining from those pleasures for the sake of Hashem.

Here are the actual verses (Numbers 6:2-8):

- (ב) דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי יִפְּלֵא לְנַדָּר נָדָר
נָזִיר לְהַזִּיר לַיהוָה
- (ג) מִיַּיִן וְשֵׁכָר יִזִּיר חֹמֶץ יַיִן וְחֹמֶץ שֵׁכָר לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְכָל מְשֻׁרֵת עֲנָבִים לֹא
יִשְׁתֶּה וְעֲנָבִים לְחַיִּים וַיִּבְשִׂים לֹא יֹאכַל
- (ד) כָּל יְמֵי נְזָרוֹ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִגֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן מִסְרָצְנִים וְעַד זֶג לֹא יֹאכַל
- (ה) כָּל יְמֵי נְדָר נְזָרוֹ תַעֲרֹ לֹא יַעֲבֹר עַל רֹאשׁוֹ עַד מְלֵאת הַיָּמִם אֲשֶׁר
יִזִּיר לַיהוָה קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה גְדֹל פָּרַע שְׂעַר רֹאשׁוֹ
- (ו) כָּל יְמֵי הַזִּירוֹ לַיהוָה עַל נֶפֶשׁ מֵת לֹא יָבֹא
- (ז) לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ וּלְאֶחָיו וּלְאֶחָתוֹ לֹא יִטְמָא לָהֶם בְּמֵתָם כִּי נָזֵר אֱלֹהֵיו עַל
רֹאשׁוֹ

(ח) כֹּל יְמֵי נְזִירוֹ קָדֵשׁ הוּא לַיהוָה

2) *“Speak to the Bnai Yisroel and say to them: A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem,*

3) *From new or aged wine shall he abstain, and he shall not drink vinegar of wine or vinegar of aged wine; anything in which grapes have been steeped shall he not drink, and fresh and dried grapes he shall not eat.*

4) *All the days of his Nazirite vow, anything made from grapes, even the pits or skins, he shall not eat.*

5) *All the days of his Nazirite vow, a razor shall not pass over his head until the completion of the days that he will be a Nazirite for the sake of Hashem, holy shall he be, the growth of hair on his head shall grow.*

6) *All the days of abstinence for the sake of Hashem, he shall not come near a dead person.*

7) *To his father or to his mother, to his brother or to his sister – he shall not contaminate himself to them upon their death, for the crown of his G-d is upon his head.*

8) *All the days of his abstinence he is holy to Hashem.*

The Torah has designated a few key areas from which the Nazir must refrain, and through abstaining from them, he can focus on his achieving a closer relationship with Hashem and thus become a holier person.

As a symbol of wealth and pleasure, wine holds a place of prominence not shared by any other drink. With its intoxicating

property, under its influence man loses his ability to focus and, in an intoxicated state, may commit sins that in a clear and rational state of mind he would never do. The Nazir wants to be constantly focused on his service to Hashem without interruption and wishes to distance himself from any possibility of committing a sin, something wine can cause. Being forbidden to drink wine also keeps him out of the company of others who are imbibing alcoholic beverages, a lifestyle not conducive to a holy person. Thus, it is appropriate for a Nazir to abstain from wine.

One's hair is also a status symbol in this world. Its style, color, and volume speak volumes about the one sporting the hair. When one cannot groom himself and must let his hair grow wild, he feels unkempt and humble. This also helps him stay away from materialism and allows him to focus on spiritual matters instead of his looks.

The third restriction, not coming in contact with the dead (including his seven closest relatives - father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister and wife), puts the Nazir on the same level as the High priest, the Kohen Gadol, unlike a lesser Kohen who is permitted to defile his holy status for one of the seven close relatives.

The *Baal HaTurim* explains why a Nazir is not permitted to have any contact with a dead body. Having sanctified himself so much, the Nazir may reach the level of a prophet and know hidden information. Some may suspect that he really isn't holy at all, but, rather, he is receiving this information from souls of the dead, a common and forbidden source for secret information. To remove this suspicion, the Nazir is not allowed to even go near a dead body.

The Torah also says (Numbers 6:11) that if in the middle of a Nazir's thirty-day stint he comes in contact with a dead body, the

days that he already observed as a Nazir are lost and he must begin counting a new thirty days for a new Nazir period.

This, however, could become difficult for the Nazir who intended to be a Nazir for only thirty days. Before beginning his new stint as a Nazir, he must bring a sacrifice of two birds one of which is a קרבן חטאת a sin offering. The Torah explains that this sin offering is to atone for the sin that he committed.

(יא) וְעָשָׂה הַכֹּהֵן אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת וְאֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְכִפֶּר עָלָיו מֵאֲשֶׁר חָטָא עַל הַנָּפֶשׁ
11) *The Kohen shall make one as a sin-offering and one as a burnt offering, **and he shall provide him atonement** for having sinned regarding the person.*

Yet, what sin has the Nazir committed that requires atonement?

Rabbi Elazar HaKafar, the son of Rebbe, has an interesting take on this matter. The sin, he says, is that the Nazir has deprived himself of the permitted pleasure of drinking wine for a whole month. Hashem says to this person, “Aren’t there enough things that I have forbidden upon you? I have given you delicious foods and drinks to provide you with a pleasurable existence, and you had to go and forbid one of these permitted pleasures upon yourself?”

We learn a very interesting perspective from Rabbi Elazar’s position. Hashem has placed us in the world to enjoy all the delicious foods and drinks that He has created for us. All He asks is that we partake of them in a way permissible according to the Torah.

We need to make sure they are kosher, and make the proper blessing on them, and, after that, enjoy!

Why is the Nazir considered a sinner requiring atonement only if he has become defiled during his thirty-day term and must start over? The answer is that because he is being forced against his will to uphold the laws of being a Nazir for more time than he initially wanted to, he may regret the whole thing. In this case, he is just suffering through to reach the end of his obligation and not using his time as a Nazir to come closer to Hashem. The *Netziv* explains that since the Nazir became defiled through no fault of his own - the person next to him died suddenly – it is as if Hashem has rejected his offer to be a Nazir and they are showing him from Heaven that he wasn't on the level to be a Nazir to begin with. In that regard, he is just unnecessarily abstaining from drinking wine. Hashem doesn't want us to suffer in this world. Therefore, Hashem prefers that we use other methods for coming closer to Him, instead of becoming a Nazir.

Becoming a Nazir puts a person in a holy state of mind and elevates him above others, giving him a boost in his personal quest to come closer to Hashem.

Generally speaking, a person must *choose* to be a Nazir, and he actuates that state by saying, "I am hereby a Nazir!" With this pronouncement, he has accepted all the rules and regulations of a Nazir for a period of thirty days.

Shimshon was an exception to this general situation in two ways. He was a Nazir from birth, *and* he was a Nazir for his entire life. The angel came to his mother when Shimshon was in utero and told her that her son would be a lifetime Nazir and that he would save the Jewish people from the Philistines. As such, Shimshon was endowed

with supernatural strength. When his hair was cut in violation of his Nazir status, he temporarily lost his super natural strength.

After the Nazir completes his thirty-day term, he brings three animal sacrifices to the Holy Temple. He must also shave all the hair on his body and place it into the fire under the cooking sacrifices.

Here also, one of these sacrifices is a sin offering, a קרבן חטאת. The Nazir has become a Nazir to come closer to Hashem and has abided by all the prohibitions for thirty days, yet upon the completion of his term he brings a “sin offering”? What is *this* sin offering for?

Nachmanides explains that the Nazir has sinned by deciding to terminate his Nazir status. “After tasting how sweet it is to be extra holy, why have you decided to revert back to your previous self? Why not continue being holy?” His “crime” is in not taking the next step and achieving a new level of holiness that is right in front of him.

Nachmanides presents a frightening idea. The Nazir is considered a sinner because he did not continue to achieve a higher level of closeness to Hashem after his initial stint as a Nazir. This same sin may be attributed to each of us! If we could have achieved a higher level of spirituality and closeness to Hashem and we neglected to do so, we are going to be held accountable for not doing so.

The Talmud (Nazir 4b) brings a very instructive story about a Nazir.

אמר שמעון הצדיק מימי לא אכלתי אשם נזיר טמא חוץ מאדם אחד
שבא אלי מן הדרום יפה עינים וטוב רואי וקווצותיו סדורות לו תלתלים

אמרתי לו בני מה ראית לשחת שער נאה זה אמר לי רועה הייתי לאבי בעירי והלכתי לשאוב מים מן המעיין ונסתכלתי בבבואה שלי ופחז יצרי עלי וביקש לטורדני מן העולם אמרתי לו ריקה מפני מה אתה מתגאה בעולם שאינו שלך שסופך להיות רמה ותולע' העבודה שאגלחך לשמי' עמדתי ונשקתיו על ראשו אמרתי לו כמותך ירבו נזירים בישראל עליך הכתוב אומר איש כי יפליא לנדור נדר נזיר להזיר לה

*Shimon HaTzadik said "I never ate from the sacrifice of a **Nazir who became defiled**, except for one young man who came from the south of Israel. (He was afraid that the defiled Nazir regretted his initial vow) He was very handsome, had beautiful eyes, and the curls of his hair were layered so beautifully on his head."*

I asked him, "My son, what prompted you to become a Nazir that would require you to shave off such a beautiful head of hair?"

He answered, "I was a shepherd for my father. One day I went to draw water from the spring, and I noticed my reflection in the water. Suddenly, I realized I was very handsome and my evil inclination pounced on me and tried to get me to take pride in my beauty and to become haughty, something that would take me out of this world. I said to him, "You lowlife! Why are you taking pride in a world that is not yours? A world in which you are destined to become earth and will be eaten by worms! I swear, that I will shave you off for the sake of heaven."

When I heard this, I stood up and kissed him on his head and said, "There should be more Nazirs like you!"

One may wonder. What was it about this young man that so impressed Shimon HaTzadik that he knew he would not regret being a Nazir and thus felt comfortable to eat from his sacrifice?

Shimon HaTzadik realized that this young man understood deeply the message of the Nazir and that he would not regret his initial vow just because he became defiled. The Nazir is someone who realizes that the material world we live in is just a tool to be used to serve Hashem. In an effort to come closer to Hashem, he wants to distance himself from dangerous earthly pleasures so that he can concentrate fully on his portion in the world to come. He wants no part of wine, nor does he want the vanity that his hair can bring.

When his evil inclination pounced on him and tried to convince him to take pride in his beauty and be haughty, something that would lead him to many different types of sins, he immediately clearly identified the problem. “The evil inclination wants me to believe that this is my world, and that I am here to enjoy it for itself. The pleasures of this world are ours for the taking and we should seek to experience as many as we can in our lifetime. If one is very good looking, he should use his good looks to help him indulge in forbidden pleasures.”

The young man caught the deception right away and responded, “This is not my world! These endowments do not belong to me, they were given to me by Hashem. And, they were not given to me to use for this world, for my own self-aggrandizement, they were given to me to be used as tools to serve Hashem and earn my place in the World to Come! I will sacrifice you to Hashem by becoming a Nazir and have to shave all my hair for the sake of Hashem.”

In his great work *Mesilat Yesharim* (Chapter 11), Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, the רמח"ל, teaches us another important lesson from Nazir.

By being a Nazir, a person can condition and train himself with how to deal with his evil inclination. How is that?

One of the most successful ways that the evil inclination gets us to sin is by starting us off with something permissible and then nudging us closer and closer to the forbidden. Once we reach that point, we find it impossible to resist and commit the sin.

Say, for example, there is a non-kosher meal on the table and you are tempted to eat it. The evil inclination will tell you, "Just smell it! What could be wrong with smelling it? So, you smell it and it really smells good, so you want to eat something. It now tells you to just have one of the vegetables, they are probably kosher! So, you have one of the vegetables, and it's so good that before you know it, you have eaten all the vegetables. Now you are looking for ways to eat the rest of the portion, because once you have started even on the permissible parts, you now crave the forbidden parts and it is very easy to fall.

The Torah doesn't want the Nazir to drink the wine -- wine is dangerous. However, the Torah as well forbids grapes, dried grapes, vinegar from old wine, vinegar from new wine, grape skins and pits – any part of the grape whatsoever. This is how the Torah has indicated to us that we should keep away from any part of the forbidden object, because, ultimately, we may go from the permissible to the forbidden.

In the words of Rabbi Luzzato,

ספר מסילת ישרים - פרק יא

והיבט מה נפלאו דברי המאמר הזה, כי המשיל את האסור הזה .
לנזיר, אשר אף על פי ששקרו האסור אינו אלא שתית יין, הנה אסרה לו

תּוֹרָה כָּל מָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ שִׁיכוֹת עִם הַיַּיִן, וְהִיא זֶה לְמוֹד שֶׁלְמִדָּה תּוֹרָה לְחַכְמִים,
אִךָ יַעֲשׂוּ הֵם הַסִּיג לְתוֹרָה בְּמִשְׁמַרְתָּ שֶׁנִּמְסַר בְּיָדָם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמִשְׁמַרְתָּהּ, כִּי
לְמַדּוֹ מִן הַנָּזִיר לְאַסֵּר בְּעֵבוֹר הָעֵקֶר גַּם כָּל דְּדָמֵי לֵיהּ

Take a look at how wonderful the words of the Sages are, because they have compared this prohibition to a Nazir. Even though the main thing forbidden to the Nazir is the wine, nevertheless, the Torah forbade anything that has even the most remote connection to the wine. This is the lesson that the Torah has taught the Sages – how to create a fence around the Torah -with the power they were given to protect the laws of the Torah. They should learn from the Nazir to forbid anything that is even similar to the main forbidden object.

The laws of Nazir apply today, so, if someone accepted upon himself to be a Nazir, he would be obligated to keep all the relevant laws. However, since there is no Holy Temple, he has no way of completing the process by bringing his sacrifices, and he would have to be a Nazir until he dies. Therefore, one does not become a Nazir these days.

Even without the ability today to become a Nazir, the very valuable lessons that we can learn from it can guide us to become better and holier people.