

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Building Fences

RABBI
NOSSON
WIGGINS



The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Nezirus* 10:14), based on the Gemara in *Nedarim*, differentiates between one who accepts upon himself to become a *nazir* for the purpose of thwarting off the *yetzer harah* (evil inclination) and one who accepts upon himself to become a *nazir* for a mundane purpose. In the words of the *Rambam*, the latter is a wicked person while the former is a holy person who the Torah ranks equal to the saintly prophets of the Jewish nation.

Our Sages (*Nedarim* 9b) relate the following incident which illustrates the proper mindset of the *nazir*. Shimon Hatzadik met a *nazir* who was extraordinarily handsome and inquired of him why he chose to lower his physical beauty by becoming a *nazir*. The *nazir* responded, "One day I saw a reflection of my face in a river and my *yetzer harah* attempted to distract me from my spiritual focus. I said to him [my *yetzer harah*]: Wicked one, why are you becoming haughty in a world that isn't yours? Immediately, I accepted upon myself to become a *nazir*." Shimon Hatzadik embraced the man, kissed him on the head, and commented, "may *nezirim* like you become abundant in Israel." Evidently, Hashem wants us to use the *mitzvah* of *nazir* exclusively to overcome our desires and set our focus on our spiritual duties.

But how does becoming a *nazir* help one fend off his *yetzer harah*?

Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz explains that one of the primary aspects of *nazirus* is the creation of boundaries. The Torah forbids the *nazir* from consuming grapes (and even their peels and seeds) lest he come to drink wine, become intoxicated, and lose control over his mind and his actions. The Torah's prohibition of even the slightest grape flavor teaches that the key to battling the *yetzer harah* is setting boundaries and creating barriers. The message of the *nazir* is relevant to everyone: we can create our own personal boundaries so as to avoid the situations which would entice us to sin. This is the Torah's technique for us to be victorious in our internal struggles against worldly pleasure and temptation for sin.

The word *nazir*, which is derived from *nezer*, crown, indicates separation. A king wears a crown because he is different and elevated from his people, and a *nazir*, who has created boundaries which separate him from the temptation to sin, is likewise raised to an elevated status. Both these words, *nazir* and *nezer*, are related to the two-letter root *zair* (see *Rashi* in *Shemos* 25:1), which means an elevated border or frame. When the *nazir* constructs fences which place him beyond the range of the *yetzer harah*, he raises himself to lofty spiritual levels and sits with the prophets! 🕊

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHOK PREIS

Naso

Q. The *nazir*, like the *Kohein Gadol*, is not allowed to become *tamei* (ritually impure) by attending funerals or the like. I get that. And as with the *Kohein Gadol*, the Torah includes immediate family members in this restriction. I get that, too. But, unlike the *Kohein Gadol*, there is no mention of "son" and "daughter" in this list. This I don't get. Are they exceptions to the rule?

A. Despite your very attentive reading of the text, son and daughter are in fact included with other family members and the same prohibition does apply. But that only strengthens your question – why are they not mentioned in the text?

The *Malbim*, based on the *Sifri*, explains that there is no need to express the prohibition of the *nazir* becoming *tamei* to his or her children since it is rather obvious. The *nazir's* parent could theoretically also be a *nazir*. Nonetheless, the Torah prohibits becoming *tamei* to any parent, even a similarly *nazir*-elevated parent. It therefore goes without saying that there can be no leniency to become *tamei* to a young child who doesn't have the capacity to share the *nazir* status.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky shares a very different perspective.

Who typically became a *nazir*?

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

The transformation that is hoped for in the *nazir* process would rarely be effective after one is very set in his ways. In early adulthood, the process was more likely to be productive and most often the *nazir* was from this young demographic. The Torah does not articulate the ramifications of a *nazir's* child's passing since it was generally not pertinent – the typical *nazir* was too young to have children of his or her own. 🕒

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.



A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Samuel Pearlman flew from New York to Chicago for an important business meeting with a wealthy businessman. If all went as planned, Samuel would earn \$4.2 million on the deal. Samuel arrived for the 4:30 meeting early and decided to stop at a local *shul* for a 4:00 PM *mincha minyan*. To Samuel's disappointment, the *minyan* was slow to materialize, and at 4:25 the tenth man finally showed up. Samuel approached the *ba'al tefillah* and informed him that he would need to step out right after the silent *Shemonah Esrei*. The *ba'al tefillah* begged Samuel to stay so that he could say *kaddish* for his father. Samuel was torn between his multimillion-dollar deal and helping a fellow Jew say *kaddish*. Samuel mustered all his strength and decided to stay for the entire *minyan*. After *mincha* he headed across the street to the office building where his meeting was to take place. He approached the secretary, and she said to him, "Sir, you are 20 minutes late, but don't worry, Mr. Rosenfeld hasn't arrived yet. He will be in shortly." Samuel sat down and waited. A few minutes later, he walked the *ba'al tefillah* from his *mincha minyan*! "Thank you for helping me with the *minyan*," Mr. Rosenfeld said. "In appreciation

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

In the times of the Gemara, the morning *brachos* were said as one went through his daily routine. When one sat up in bed he would say "*zokef kifufim*" and when he got dressed, he would say "*malbish arumim*." Likewise, the *bracha of ozer Yisroel bigvurah* (who girds Israel with strength) was said when one put on his belt. The *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 46:2)* writes that the custom is to say all of the *brachos* in *shul*. Regardless, we see that this *bracha* is specifically about wearing a belt. What is so special about a belt that it deserves its own *bracha*? Rav Shimshon Pincus explains that Hashem created a Jew in the most unique way; He took a physical body and a *neshama* (spiritual soul) and fused them together. Hashem does not want us to ignore the body and only focus on our soul. Rather, He wants us to channel our physical desires to be used for a higher spiritual purpose and not to be content with only material pleasures. That is why we have a belt that separates the lower half and physical area of our body from our heart to remind us that the body is to be subservient to the soul and not, G-d forbid, the opposite. 🕒

for risking this business deal for me to be able to say *kaddish* for my father, I'll be sure to get things done quickly." The deal that would normally have taken several weeks to finalize was closed that evening. 🕒

ABARBANEL: ROYAL FINANCIER AND ADVISOR TO KING FERDINAND AND QUEEN ISABELLA OF SPAIN

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Recap: Abarbanel has been banished from Portugal and the king's men are hunting for him. While Abarbanel waits to make his next move, he teaches and writes Torah.

Prior to his death sentence, Abarbanel's avenue of escape to safety was already Divinely arranged, for in mid-March of 1484 a courier arrived in Segura and informed Abarbanel that he was granted an audience with King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the monarchs of the newly united kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. Being a Jew and a fugitive, Abarbanel knew with certainty that the only reason he was being sought out by the king and queen of Spain was due to his financial prowess. The king and queen were in the middle of a drawn-out war with the neighboring Moorish Kingdom of Granada and funds were quickly drying up. Abarbanel surmised that the king and queen thought that he who had skillfully managed the financial enterprises of the Portuguese monarchs would undoubtedly be the perfect candidate to help them.

Abarbanel met with the king and queen in Tarazona (Aragon) and they must have confirmed their assumption about Abarbanel's fiscal talents, for he was soon appointed to a position as a tax-farmer, replacing the aging Jew Abraham Senior. Abarbanel and his family moved to Alcala de Henares (right outside Madrid) and there he began his new life. Abarbanel's reputation as a financial advisor spread quickly and he was soon hired by local dukes to manage their estates and enterprises. Abarbanel moved to nearby Guadalajara where he began to manage the estate and enterprises of Inigo Lopez de Mendoza, the wealthy and powerful Duke of Guadalajara. At the same time, Abarbanel was advancing in the Royal Court as well, and in 1491 we find that he is appointed as the queen's personal financial representative.

To be continued... 🕒