



RABBI SHALOM

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The *Nazir's* Youthful Attitude

כל ימי הזירו לה' על נפש מת לא יבא: לאביו ולאמו
לאחיו ולאחתו לא יטמא להם במתם כי נזר אלהיו על
ראשו. (במדבר ז:ז-ז)

All the days that he abstains for Hashem, he shall not come into contact with the dead. To his father, to his mother, to his brother, or to his sister, he shall not defile himself if they die, for the crown of his God is upon his head. (*Bamidbar* 7:6-7)

The Torah states that a *nazir* may not come into contact with a corpse – not even a parent or sibling. These laws clearly parallel the prohibitions that apply to the *Kohen Gadol*. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky (Emes L'Yaakov), raises an obvious question that is easily overlooked. The list of specific people for whom the *nazir* may not become *tamei* does not include children, even though they are explicitly mentioned as exceptions for whom a regular *kohen* may become *tamei* (*Vayikra* 21:2: “except for his close relative: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother...”). So why

aren't children listed specifically among those for whom a *nazir* may not become *tamei*?

Rav Yaakov suggests that although the prohibition of a *nazir* becoming *tamei* from a corpse clearly applies to a son and daughter, they are not explicitly mentioned because the *nezirim*, logically and historically, were young people. Taking an oath to become a *nazir* is a bold move, which has a tremendous impact on one's daily life during the term of *nezirus*. Only young, unattached people whose path is not set can undertake such a challenge. In *Sefer Amos* (2:11), when *nazirim* are mentioned they are referred to as young men: “I shall establish from your children prophets and from your young men *nezirim*.”

The Torah juxtaposes the *parasha* of *nezirus* to the *parasha* of *sota*, because after an individual witnesses what transpires with an *isha sota*, he will want to refrain from drinking wine, which can lead to infidelity and promiscuity. When he sees the potential negative effects of wine, he will resolve to change his lifestyle. It is much more difficult for middle-aged people to change their lives, as they are set in their ways.

Perhaps that is what the Torah is hinting to here. No matter what our stage in life,

we have to conquer natural tendencies. We have to constantly be in “growth” mode and receptive to positive change and improvement. When Rav Shach turned 100, he told his students that he was going to accept upon himself a new resolution. The students were curious: What new practice is Rav Shach going to adopt at age 100? He told them: “I am going to be careful to always *bentch* (recite the blessing after meals) from a *bentcher*. At 100 years old, Rav Shach wanted to improve his *kavana* when he *bentched*. He may have been turning 100 but he had the youthful attitude of a *nazir*.

Our youthful attitude of constant growth and self-improvement should remain with us throughout life

It is much easier for a young person to abstain from the pleasures of this world. Obviously, anybody can be a *nazir*, even an older person, though it was not so common. An older person thinks: “This is who I am, God; take me or leave me.” The Torah does not explicitly include “son and daughter” in the list since most *nezirim* are young and unmarried.

The message for us is that we have to have the attitude of a *nazir* – to always be willing to make positive changes to improve ourselves.

In *Parashas Ki Tisa*, Yehoshua is referred to as a *na’ar*, a youth: “His attendant, Yehoshua Bin Nun, a lad, would not depart

from the tent” (*Shemos* 33:11). Yehoshua was in his late 50s; why is he referred to as a lad? Because of his youthful attitude. He shadowed Moshe and served him so that he could learn and constantly improve.

As people grow older, they often retire and are not interested in changing anything in their lives. Judaism does not have that attitude. No matter the stage in life, we focus on future growth. We need to constantly seek to accomplish something more. As the saying goes: “you don’t stop having fun when you get old; you get old when you stop having fun.” It’s all in one’s attitude and mindset. A person can be 110 years old and have the attitude of a *na’ar*. Age is a number, and it may change annually, but our youthful attitude of constant growth and self-improvement should remain with us throughout life. Similarly, with learning Torah, a knowledgeable person is referred to as a “*talmit chacham*”- a smart student – who can continue to attain greater knowledge. As we celebrate Shavuot, may we keep this in mind and constantly strive to enhance our learning and commitment to Torah and grow in our observance of both mitvos ben adam l’makom and ben adam l’chavero! ■



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