



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת נשא

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי יִפְּלֹא לִנְדֹר נָזִיר לְהַזִּיר לַה' מִזֵּין וְשָׁכַר יָזִיר וְכו'. כָּל יְמֵי נָזְרוֹ, קָדֹשׁ הוּא לַה' (במדבר ו, ב-ח)

Speak to the Bnei Yisroel and say to them: A man or woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem; from new or aged wine shall he abstain ... All the days of his abstinence he is holy to Hashem. (Bamidbar 6:2-8)

In this week's *Sidrah*, the Torah outlines the laws governing a Nazir. A person who voluntarily wishes to elevate himself by accepting the status of a Nazir must follow specific restrictions. These include total abstinence from grape and grape products, refraining from cutting his hair, and avoiding contact with a corpse, which would render him *tamei*.

R' Leib *zatzal* presents a question from R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm regarding the prominent status accorded by the Torah to the Nazir. The Nazir has, in total, distanced himself from drinking wine, so why does the Torah consider him a קָדֹשׁ? Furthermore, the Meforshim explain that the name נָזִיר is derived from the word נָזַר, crown, implying that the Nazir is viewed as being crowned. What significant achievement has he accomplished to deserve such an honourable title and description?

R' Simcha Zissel explains that the Nazir's abstinence from wine reflects a deep appreciation for a clear mind and complete intellect. Wine is known to cloud one's thinking, making it difficult to maintain clarity. Therefore, the Nazir, by recognising the importance of staying fully in touch with his intellect and refusing to allow any substance to impair his judgment, is praised by the Torah. For his awareness of the essential nature of clear thinking and sound judgment, the Nazir indeed deserves to be crowned and regarded as a קָדֹשׁ!

The *possuk* in *Yeshayah* (29:14) conveys Hashem's admonishment to Klal Yisroel: הִנְנִי יוֹסֵף לְהַפְּלִיא אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה הַפְּלִא וּפְלֵא, וְאֶבְדָּה חֲכָמַת חֲכָמָיו *Behold, I will continue to perform more wonders against this people – wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of its wise men will be lost.* Rashi (ibid.) cites the Midrash: קִשָּׁה סִילוּקָם שֶׁל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּפָלִים כְּחוּרְבֵן בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְכָל קָלִלוֹת שֶׁבְּמִשְׁנֵה תוֹרָה *The removal of the wise men of Klal Yisroel is twice as difficult as the destruction of the Mikdash and all the curses listed in Devarim.* In those curses, the Torah states (*Devarim* 28:59): וְהִפְּלֵא, (Hashem will make the blows against Klal Yisroel) *extraordinary*. Additionally, when the Torah describes the defeats of exile, including the Churban HaMikdash, the root word פֹּלֵא is only used once. However, in the context of losing the Chachomim, the Torah employs the word twice - הִפְּלֵא וּפְלֵא.

Why is the loss of our Chachomim described in such grave terms? Why is it seen as a greater calamity than the destruction of the Mikdash and the horrific curses listed in Parshas Ki Savo? R' Simcha Zissel explains that the Churban did not lead to a depletion of knowledge and intellect among our Chachomim. After the first Churban, the Chachomim known as the חֲכָמֵי הַמִּסְגֵּר remained (See *Shmuel II* 24:16 and *Gittin* 80a), and even after the second Churban, Yavneh and its Chachomim

persisted. In contrast, the loss of Chachmei Yisroel results in damage to the תורה and intellect, which is the most significant cause of calamity. A person may suffer severe physical illness, but if their intellect is intact, they are not considered lost. However, once someone suffers a mental deficiency, they can no longer be regarded as a complete person. The greatest tragedy for an individual is experiencing a decline in intellect.

The reason for the punishment regarding the demise of Klal Yisroel's Chachomim, along with the resulting lack of intellect and understanding, is reflected in the *possuk* (ibid. 13): וַיֹּאמֶר ה': יֵעָן כִּי נִגַּשׁ הָעָם הַזֶּה, בְּפִיָּו וּבִשְׂפָתָיו כְּבָדוּנִי וְלִבּוֹ רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי, וְתִהְיֶה יְרֵאָתָם אֹתִי מִצּוֹת אֲנָשִׁים מְלֻמָּדָה - לֵכֵן הִנְנִי יוֹסֵף לְהַפְלִיא וְכוּ', Hashem said: *Inasmuch as this people has drawn close (to Me), with its mouth and its lips it has honoured Me, yet it has distanced its heart from Me – their fear of Me is like rote learning of human commands – therefore, behold, I will continue to perform more wonders ...* Although Klal Yisroel performed the *mitzvos*, they did so superficially, lacking genuine feeling or emotion. Because their actions were devoid of intellect and meaning, they faced punishment - *middah knegged middah* – with the passing of the Chachomim and the intellect they provided.

There is an anecdote about someone who used to daven in an unusually loud and spirited manner, crying out and banging his legs and feet against the wall. The Rebbe addressed him, referencing the *tzava'ah* of R' Yehudah HaChasid, which states that a hen that calls out like a rooster must be killed. The reason behind this is that the rooster possesses the ability to sense the arrival of dawn, even if it is in a dark, sealed cage; it can feel the warmth of the sun's rays and begin to call out in joy. In contrast, the hen lacks this awareness of the sun. If it calls out, it does so without the consciousness of warmth and is deemed defective, hence it should be killed. Similarly, calling out during davening must stem from a genuine feeling of warmth and closeness to Hashem, rather than being a mindless act or a meaningless display.

The end of the *parshah* discusses in detail the *korbanos* brought by the Nasi of each *shevet*. Although the offerings were identical in number and weight, the Torah emphasises this repetition to teach us that each Nasi arrived at his formulation independently and was not imitating one another. Despite their similarities, the Torah confirms that each Nasi acted on his own initiative and with complete noble intention.

From the praise the Torah gives to the Nazir, we learn the importance of maintaining one's intellect without compromise. The Nazir recognised how wine can cloud judgment and therefore chose to abstain from it. We must strive to act mindfully rather than relying on rote behaviour or simply copying others' actions. Additionally, the *parshah* of the Nesi'im demonstrates that when one acts with pure intention, his *mitzvos* hold great significance, even if many others perform the same actions.