



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

The Crown of Freedom

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects

For the entire duration of his *nezirus* (abstinence), he shall not eat any product of the grape vine...no razor shall pass over his head... he shall not come into contact with the dead... for the *nezer* (crown) of his G-d is upon his head.

Parshas Naso enumerates the laws pertaining to a *nazir*. A *nazir* is a person who takes a vow to abstain from consuming any grape products such as wine, from shaving or cutting his or her hair, and from coming in contact with a dead body, even a family member. The Torah describes the *nazir* as one who has the *nezer* (crown) of his G-d on his head – an apparent reference to the outgrowth of hair that results from his vow.

The Ibn Ezra notes the similarity between the word *nazir* and *nezer* and suggests that, in addition to merely being two words that sound alike, the word *nazir* may actually be derived from the word *nezer* meaning crown. The Ibn Ezra explains that in truth, all people, to some extent, are slaves to their desires. Only someone who has freed themselves from these desires is truly a king or queen – truly a free person.

The *nazir* is someone who has recognized a need to act drastically to overcome his or her base instincts by making a vow of *nezirus*. Now in full control of his or her actions, the *nazir* is adorned with the crown of freedom.

Our Sages offer us an alternative path to reigning in our desires when they teach us (Avos 6:2), "Only one who studies Torah is truly free." So long as we give in to our base desires for honor, wealth or physical pleasure, we are not truly free. Through the study of Torah, we have the opportunity to perfect our character and outlook, thereby freeing ourselves to make the right choices in life.

How fortunate are we to have been given such a gift!

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Speak to Aharon and his sons saying, "So shall you bless Bnei Yisrael..." (6, 23)

Rav Yosi said, "I never went against the words of my friends. I know I am not a Kohen. But if my friends would tell me to go give Birchas Kohanim, I would go." (Shabbos 118b)

Rav Yosi did not know the prohibition for a non-kohen to give Birchas Kohanim. (Tosafos)

A non-kohen who gives Birchas Kohanim transgresses a positive command, as the verse says, 'Speak to Aharon and his sons...'. (Kesubos 24b)

It seems to be a clear transgression for a non-kohen to give the Birchas Kohanim. How could Rav Yosi not have known about it?

Parsha Riddle

Speak to Aharon and his sons saying, "So shall you bless Bnei Yisrael..." (6, 23)

How do these words impact the way we give blessings to our children Friday night?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Which date of the calendar is set as the date for Shavuos?

Answer: There is no set date on the calendar for Shavuos. It is always 50 days after the omer begins.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parashas Naso contains the laws of the Nazir, who takes a vow to abstain from wine (among other things). We have previously discussed the conflicting Talmudic approaches toward such abstemiousness: some sages (*Bava Kama* 91b), noting that (in certain circumstances) the Nazir brings a sin-offering, maintain that needlessly depriving oneself of innocent pleasure is sinful, whereas others (*Taanis* 11a-b) consider such conduct holy (and perhaps pious). We mentioned that the Tosafists harmonize the two approaches, explaining that at least in certain exigent circumstances, a vow of Nezirus may be appropriate, but it nevertheless remains problematic and retains an aspect of sinfulness.

This provocative idea, that a course of action can be simultaneously correct and yet contain a problematic, even sinful, aspect, has parallels elsewhere in Jewish thought:

- The Talmud (*Yoma* 18b-19b) relates the elders of the court would swear the High Priest to fealty to the Rabbinic tradition in the performance of the Temple service on Yom Kippur, an unfortunate necessity since the High Priests were suspected of harboring sectarian sympathies. Subsequent to administering the oath, however, they would weep, due the possibility that they had suspected an innocent man – despite the fact that such suspicions were clearly necessary and prudent.
- The Talmud (*Bava Basra* 16a) explains that when Penina goaded and provoked Chana regarding her childlessness (*Shmuel* 1 1:6), her intentions were "for the sake of Heaven," in order to cause her to pray for children. Nevertheless, there is a *midrash* (*Midrash Shmuel* 5:10) that explains that Penina was punished for her hurtful conduct by the death of almost all her children! R. Chaim Shmuelevitz (*Sichos Mussar* #76) explains that although Penina was "absolutely righteous," and undoubtedly found it extremely painful to hurt Chana, she was nevertheless punished, since "One who hurts another, regardless of his intention, is like one who sticks his hand into a burning oven, and good intentions cannot affect the outcome at all. The danger involved in a sin against one's fellow man is like a natural reality, exactly like a fire that burns due to the laws of nature." Apparently, although Penina acted perfectly correctly, she still suffered dire consequences for hurting Chana. (But see *Ani le-Dodi ve-Dodi Li* (R. Nebenzahl) pp. 180-82 for an alternate, more traditional interpretation of R. Shmuelevitz's words.)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I'm for inauguration.
2. Duplicates.
3. In lieu of donations.
4. I am for Chanuka.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I'm called for my platform.
2. Take cover.
3. With love.
4. I am three.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Shevatim/Tribes (We came from the third, We are not Native Americans, We were flagged, A baker's dozen.)

#2 Har Sinai (I resembled a barrel, I was humble, I hint to hatred, I was a place of healing.)

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