



Parshas Naso

June 2, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Training Course

by Rabbi Yaakov Zions

We are all familiar with the oft-repeated motto, “Do as I say, not as I do.” We also know the complete moral bankruptcy of those who promote this ideology. The story is told of noted ethics philosopher and Nobel laureate Bertrand Russell who was once questioned by the Harvard Board of Governors about an immoral act he had participated in. When faced with the hypocrisy of being an ethics professor engaged in immoral conduct, Russell argued his private matters had nothing to do with his professional duties. “But you are a Professor of Ethics!” maintained one of the board members. “I was also a Professor of Geometry at Cambridge,” Russell rejoined, “but they never asked me why I was not a triangle.” Providing education isn’t merely about talking the talk, but entails walking the walk, as well.

In this week’s parsha, we learn about the *nazir*, an individual who refrains from many permitted activities as an act of holiness. In the *haftara*, we read about Shimshon (Samson), the famous judge of the Jewish Nation, who was a life-long *nazir*. Shimshon’s parents were childless, and his mother Zelalfonis (see Bava Basra 91a) was told by a *malach* (celestial being) that she would give birth to a special child. The child, she was told, would have to be raised as a *nazir*. She relates the conversation to her husband, Mano’ach, who requests to have the *malach* reappear and dictate the rules to them.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) asks a basic question on this narrative. Why did Mano’ach ask Hashem to send the angel “to teach us what we should do with the lad who is to be born?” (Shoftim 13:8) Didn’t he know the laws of a *nazir*, which are clearly written in the Torah? Even though some of the Sages call Mano’ach an *am ha’aretz* (ignoramus), was he so ignorant that he was unfamiliar with laws that even schoolchildren knew?

And if he wanted to learn the intricate details of *nezirus* that are passed down only in the Oral Torah, was there a shortage of Torah scholars and judges who could have clarified the details? Why did he need the *malach* to return? Furthermore, when Hashem answered Mano’ach’s prayer and the angel appeared a second time, the angel only repeated the instructions that he had conveyed the first time he appeared!

Rabbi Schwab explains that Mano’ach did not request that the angel reappear to clarify the laws of *nezirus*. Rather, he wished to ask the angel about matters of *chinuch*, educating children. Mano’ach wanted to understand how he would be able to raise a child with the additional restrictions and holiness of a *nazir* if he, the child’s father, wouldn’t follow these restrictions himself. Indeed, when the angel returned, he said, “You are right, Mano’ach. The father of a child who will be a *nazir* must also conduct himself as a *nazir*.” When we reread the words of the angel, we see this idea clearly. Rabbi Schwab explains how grammatically, the *malach*’s second set of instructions can be read as follows: “Everything that I commanded her, you shall observe.” (ibid.:14) Mano’ach was told that he, too, must adhere to the laws of *nezirus*.

Children learn from what their parents do far more than from what their parents say. Just as a parent cannot raise a child to be a *nazir* unless he conducts himself as a *nazir*, no parent can expect his child to adhere to good behavior that he himself does not embrace. As Rabbi Schwab writes in Selected Speeches (pages 97-98; abridged), “Here is an awesome challenge for Jewish parents. The *chinuch* of a Jewish child starts in the crib. The Sages tell us that as soon as the child is able to understand, parents should talk to him in the language of holiness; namely, to tell the child that there is a Creator Who has created us, Who knows us,

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Stories For The Soul

Out of This World

The Sfas Emes, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Gur (1847-1905) rarely traveled away from his home. Consequently, any trip he took to visit another town or city was a great occasion for his followers.

The Sfas Emes once traveled to Warsaw, which was not far from his hometown of Gur. When he arrived, a large gathering was waiting for him, and his host prepared a lavish celebration in honor of the occasion.

The Sfas Emes told his host that he did not want to attend the reception. The host argued that our Sages teach (Pesachim 86b), “*Kol mah sheyomar licha ba’al habayis aseichutz mitzei*,” “Whatever the host instructs you to do, comply, unless he asks you to go out (i.e., leave).” Therefore, said the host to his esteemed guest, you must attend!

The Sfas Emes replied that the word “*tzei*” (go out) of the Talmud’s statement can be interpreted as referring to something else besides simply vacating the premises. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (4:28) says that three things take a person out of the world: envy, lust, and honor. Since honor will take a person out of the world, said the Sfas Emes, I need not listen to my host, for the honor you are bestowing upon me will force me out of the world!

The *nazir*, discussed in this week’s parsha, is a person who, realizing the danger posed to one’s spiritual stature by indulging in worldly pleasures, vows to abstain from wine. We may not need to take such a vow, but we would do well to heed the lesson of the *nazir*.

Kollel Happenings

TOUGH LOVE: DEALING WITH A DIFFICULT PARENT AT THE JUNE T4T

Join Ari Hoffman, Counselor, MA, LPC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore this emotionally-fraught and sensitive subject. Wednesday, June 7, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Why is Parshas Bamidbar generally read on the Shabbos prior to Shavuos?

A: Tosafos (Megilah 31b) explain that this is to have a “buffer” between the *kelalos* (curses) and associated punishment detailed in the previous parsha, Bechukosai, and the holiday of Shavuos. Maharsha explains that this isn't just about breaking with a benign

parsha. Parshas Bamidbar contains the counting of the Jews, which signifies the completion of the nation and is the antidote to the *kelalos*!

This week's question: When does Shavuos occur during the week of Parshas Beha'aloscha, an exception to the general rule?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Shlomo Luria, the Maharshal Part II

Rabbi Luria studied in Lublin in the yeshiva headed by Rabbi Shalom Shachna. Rabbi Shalom Shachna, as well as his teacher Rabbi Yaakov Pollak, were proponents of the *pilpul* method of study, as discussed in past weeks in this column. Rabbi Shlomo himself became an opponent of this method of study, preferring to focus on delving into the plain and simple meaning of the Talmud and other sources.

Rabbi Shlomo later studied in Ostroh under Rabbi Shlomo Haberkasten, whose daughter, Lipka, he later married.

At some point later Rabbi Shlomo was appointed rabbi of Brisk; he served as rabbi there and in other Lithuanian towns for some fifteen years. Around 1550, his teacher and father-in-law Rabbi Kalonymous became Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) in the yeshiva in Brisk, and Rabbi Shlomo succeeded him as rabbi

of Ostroh. In 1555, he became head of the yeshiva of Lublin where he had studied years earlier. Internal issues in the yeshiva led him to open his own yeshiva in Lublin, which became known as the Maharshal's Shul.

Many of the greatest Torah authorities of the next generation were students of the Maharshal. Among them were: Rabbi Yehoshua Falk, author of the *Sefer Me'iras Einayim* (commonly referred to by its acronym, SM²A) and the *P'risha* and *D'risha* commentaries on the Tur and its Bais Yosef commentary; Rabbi Mordechai Yafeh, author of the *Levush* (a halachic work intended to be an alternative to the Shulchan Aruch); Rabbi Chaim Loew, brother of Rabbi Yehuda Loew, the famed Maharal of Prague; the father of Rabbi Yeshaya Horowitz, known as the Shelah, the acronym for his famous work, *Shnai Luchos Habris*.

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Who watches over us and Who has given us mitzvos to keep. And as soon as the child is able to talk, his father and mother have to teach him the fundamentals of *emunah* in the Torah and *emunah* in Hashem. It goes without saying that one of the basic conditions of successful *chinuch* is that the parents become role models for the child. There are two kinds of *chinuch*, and they go side-by-side. One is through teaching, as we are instructed on Pesach, “you shall teach your son.” The other is the *chinuch* that emanates from our own example to influence our children by that which we do. This lesson we impart to them especially

on Sukkos, when we are not commanded to speak about the wanderings of our forefathers in the desert, but only to sit in a sukkah together with our children. What follows is that when, for instance, a child sees his father learning Torah, whether all the time or part of the time, or even only in the precious hours of the early morning or late at night, the child has a role model to follow. Also, fathers and mothers can make the Shabbos an eternal bond between them and Hashem for their children simply by being an example.” May we merit to be shining examples for our families and the world at large!

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