

Meshech Chochmah Parshas Naso

The Nazir and the Nesiim – Patterns in Korbanos

וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הַנָּזִיר בְּיוֹם מְלֵאת יָמֵי נִזְרוֹ... וְהִקְרִיב אֶת קָרְבָּנוֹ לַה' כֶּבֶשׂ... לְעֹלָה
וְכִבְשָׂה אַחַת... לְחֹטְאֵת וְאַיִל אֶחָד... לְשֵׁלָמִים

This shall be the law of the Nazir on the day the term of his nezirus is completed... He shall bring his offering to Hashem, a sheep... as an olah (burnt-offering), a ewe... as a chatas (sin-offering) and a ram... as a shelamim (peace-offering) (6:13-14)

The Meshech Chochmah notes that the combination of these three korbanos brought by the nazir – an *olah*, *chatas* and *shelamim* – is also found later on in our parsha, as the korbanos offered by the Nesiim on the twelve inaugural days of the Mishkan.¹ The reason for this parallel, says the Meshech Chochmah, is because the day the nazir finishes his term is also a day of inauguration.

The period during which the nazir abstains from wine, representing worldly pleasures, is geared toward him gaining control over his desires. This process even entails him refraining from mitzvos involving these matters, such as partaking of wine for Kiddush and Havdalah, as well as not participating in the burial of a close family member if they should pass away during his *nezirus*. Indeed, for this reason the nazir brings a chatas; for even though refraining from these mitzvos is justified in the broader context of the spiritual benefit from being a nazir, nonetheless he requires atonement for the negligence of those mitzvos.

At any rate, the goal of being a nazir lies in the days following his term of *nezirus*, where he resumes full involvement in physical life, but now in a way where he is in control of his desires, not controlled by them.

Korbanos in Spirit

The Gemara in Sanhedrin,² commenting on the pasuk in Tehillim:³ “זִבְחֵי אֱלֹקִים – רֵיחַ נְשֻׁבְרָה – *The sacrifices [desired by] Hashem are a broken spirit,*” states that

¹ See e.g. Bamidbar 7:15-17.

² 43b.

³ 51:19.

for a person to attain a contrite spirit is equal to all the korbanos combined. The level a nazir seeks to attain through his abstinence is likewise that of a “broken spirit”, breaking the control his desires have over him. Therefore, since the nazir is preparing to re-engage in physical life in a way which represents an ongoing offering of korbanos, he inaugurates this transition with exactly the same combination of korbanos offered by the Nesiim while inaugurating the Mishkan to have korbanos offered in it on an ongoing basis!

Behind the Priestly Blessing

דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה תְבָרְכוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

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

R' Yose and His Colleagues

Regarding the mitzvah of bircas Kohanim, we find the following statement in the Gemara:⁴

Said R' Yose: In all my days I never disobeyed the words of my colleagues. [For example,] I know about myself that I am not a Kohen, but if my colleagues would tell me “Ascend to the platform [where the Kohanim are reciting bircas kohanim], I would ascend.”

Needless to say, these words of R' Yose require explanation, as discussed by the commentators.⁵ On the one hand, R' Yose clearly does not mean to say that were his colleagues to instruct him to do so he would actually recite the blessing along with the Kohanim, for the Gemara elsewhere explicitly states that it is forbidden for a non-Kohen to recite bircas Kohanim!⁶ Apparently, all R' Yose was saying was

⁴ Shabbos 118b.

⁵ See e.g. Tosafos Shabbos ibid. (s.v. *ilu*) with commentary of Maharsha, and Darkei Moshe and Magen Avraham to Orach Chaim 128.

⁶ Kesubos 24b. See Rashi there who explains that the prohibition is derived from our verse which states “So shall you [Aharon and his sons] bless,” indicating that only a Kohen is permitted to bestow these blessings upon the people.

that he would ascend to the platform and stand together with the Kohanim while they were reciting the blessings. If this is so, however, then we have the opposite problem, for presumably, to stand with the Kohanim and remain silent while they are reciting the blessings involves no problem whatsoever. If so, we must ask: how does the fact that R' Yose would be prepared to do this reflect the great respect which he accorded his colleagues?

Receiving the Blessings

The Meshech Chochmah explains the meaning behind R' Yose's words. The Gemara⁷ states that anyone who does not place himself in front of the Kohanim while they are reciting bircas Kohanim forfeits the blessings. By standing behind the Kohanim, he demonstrates that he is uninterested in receiving the blessings they are bestowing. We can now appreciate the *chiddush* within R' Yose's statement. By ascending to the *duchan* along with the Kohanim instead of remaining with the rest of the congregation, he would thereby be removing himself from the area which would enable him to receive the blessings. Seemingly, R' Yose is saying that in order to fulfill the words of his colleagues, he would be prepared to forfeit the blessings of the Kohanim – a major gesture, indeed!

However, the Meshech Chochmah explains that this is not the true depth of R' Yose's statement. In reality, it was the very respect he accorded to his colleagues which ensured that he did not forfeit the blessing, even while not standing in front of them.

In the Fields

The above-mentioned Gemara qualifies its statement regarding those who are not in front of the Kohanim by saying that people who are unable to make it to shul at all *are* included in the blessings, e.g. people in the fields in outlying areas who do not have access to a shul. The basis of this qualification is that it is specifically one who is present while the Kohanim are reciting the blessings and yet remains behind them who demonstrates thereby that he does not wish to receive the blessings. One who is unable to position himself in front of the Kohanim conveys no such disdain, and therefore is included in the blessings, wherever he is.

⁷ Sotah 38b.

In light of this we now appreciate how R' Yose's statement reflected his high regard for his colleagues' words. Were they to tell him to ascend to the *duchan* – a place where a non-Kohen would forfeit the blessings – he would do so, and yet he would still receive the blessings! Since he regarded his colleagues' words so highly, he would be unable to refuse their directive to stand with the Kohanim. As such, his status would be that of one who is *unable* to stand facing the Kohanim – effectively like the people in the fields – so that he would then be eligible to receive the blessings standing where he was.