

MORASHAH
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Parashat HaShavuah Series

Parashat Naso

Parashat Naso is the Torah source for two entire *Masechtot* (tractates) in *Shas* (the Talmud):

1. Sotah
2. Nazir

Nazir – “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”

The issue of the *Nazir* has elicited a wide-range of responses in Rabbinic Literature. Is being a *Nazir* good or bad? It can be good, it can be bad, and it's almost always ugly!

The Good *Nazir*

The Talmud¹ relates Shimon Haztaddiq's policy against eating from the *Nazir's* sacrifice. Apparently, he felt being a *Nazir* was bad.

But the exceptional case came his way. A narcissist excessively admired his own beauty. When he realized his danger, he took an oath of *n'zirut* - thereby becoming ugly! Once stripped of his beauty, he no longer fell into temptation and his ugliness was positively beautiful in the eyes of Shimon Haztaddiq. This "Good" *Nazir* rated special handling.

The Bad *Nazir*

On the other hand, a *Nazir* must bring a "sin offering" at the end of his *n'zirut*, suggesting that being a *Nazir* is bad. The mainstream consensus understanding is that the *Nazir's* sin is adding on to the Torah's exhaustive list of prohibitions by eschewing wine and not cutting his hair.

The Ramban gives a contrarian view: that the sin of the *Nazir* is terminating his state of

¹ *Talmud Bavli: Nedarim 9b, Nazir 4b; Talmud Yerushalmi: Nedarim 1:1, Nazir 1:5; Tosefta: Nazir 4:6*

The *Bavli* version specifies that he didn't eat the *asham* of a *Nazir* **tamei**, but he would eat from the ordinary *asham Nazir*. But the *Tosefta* and *Yerushalmi* versions don't make this distinction.

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pious sanctity and returning to the world of ordinary mortals. This is the sin for which the soon-to-be *ex-Nazir* must bring an offering, for his fall from goodness.

So being Good to excess can be Bad, unless by being Good, one avoids the temptation of being Bad.

Moral, never add on to the Torah, unless it protects you from violating the Torah itself. Avot 1:1 “*assu s'yag latorah*” – make a barrier around the Torah. This is good, but extra piety without concern for the existing Torah is bad.

The Ugly

But every *Nazir* is ugly. He lets his hair grow, and avoids what the Torah permits, namely drinking wine.

But that is just the beginning of ugly! At the end of his period of *n'zirut*, the *Nazir* shears off his locks completely! Talk about extremes!

And so it is

- The Good
- The Bad
- The Ugly

Shabbat Shalom!

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