

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT NASSO

Haftarah: The Birth of a Superhero

The Haftora for Parshas Nasso is from the book of Shoftim (Judges). It is the story of how Shimshon (Samson) was born.

The connection to our parsha is that Parshas Nasso tells us the laws of the Nazir, one who took upon himself to abstain from drinking wine, cutting his hair, or coming in contact with anything impure for a period of time, usually a month. Similarly, in the Haftora, Shimshon's parents are instructed that he is to be a Nazir all his life. There is also a connection to Shavuoth, which always falls in the week preceding or following Parshas Nasso, as we will soon see.

Shimshon's mother, who according to the Talmud was called Tzlalponis, was the wife of Manoach from the tribe of Dan. She was barren, she never had children. An angel in the form of a man appeared to her and told her that she would have a son. He instructed her that during her pregnancy she shouldn't drink wine or eat anything impure. From here we learn that what a woman consumes during pregnancy, affects the growing baby in her womb. It is therefore customary for Jewish women to be extra careful to keep to high standards while pregnant, to ensure that her baby has a holy spiritual advantage.

He instructed her with regards to the upbringing of the baby, that he be a Nazir from the time he is in her belly.

When she told Manoach what happened, he prayed to Hashem that He send the angelic man again. Hashem granted his wish. When Tzlalponis was out in the field, the angel appeared to her again and she ran to get her husband.

EVERY CHILD IS A BLESSING, AND EVERY PARENT IS A VESSEL FOR GREATNESS

Manoach asked the man, "Now your words will come true, what rules should be followed with the lad?" The angel answered, "Be careful of everything I said to your wife."

The Rambam tells us that Shimshon was not a complete Nazir.

There are three kinds of Nazirs.

The typical Nazir takes an oath to be a Nazir to Hashem for a set amount of time, usually a month. He is not permitted to consume anything that comes from the grapevine, cut his hair, eat anything impure, or become impure by coming in contact with a dead person. After the Nazir's time is up he brings certain sacrifices, cuts his hair and that ends his Nazirite status.

Then there is a Nazir for life, like our prophet Shmuel, who has to keep all the laws of the Nazir, except that he can cut his hair when it becomes too heavy, which is understood to mean after 12 months. To cut his hair, he brings the Nazir sacrifices and cuts his hair. At this time he can ask for his Nazirite oath to be annulled, which would end his Nazirite status, if he doesn't, he continues as a Nazir.

Then there is a Nazir like Shimshon, who was a Nazir from the womb. He was different than the other kinds of Nazirs, in that he could never cut his hair, nor ask for annulment, but he is permitted to become impure by coming in contact with a dead person, which Shimshon did. This is what the Rambam means by an incomplete Nazir, that he was allowed to become impure by coming in contact with a dead person.

In the last Mishnah of the tractate Nazir, it derives that the Shmuel was a Nazir from Shimshon, from the similar wording in the verses pertaining to them. Then the Talmud on the Mishnah debates, what is superior, to say a blessing or to respond amen, affirming one's inclusion in the blessing. Then it concludes with a famous teaching, "Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina, 'The students of the sages add peace in the world...'"

What could possibly be the connection between Shimshon and Shmuel being Nazirs and the Talmudic debate and teaching that follow?

The Rambam says that Shimshon never took the Nazirite oath. And because we learn that Shmuel was a Nazir from Shimshon, presumably Shmuel didn't either take the oath.

If they didn't take the oath, how did they become Nazirs?

Shmuel's mother, Chana, was the one who made an oath to Hashem, but the rule is that when a mother promises that her child will be a Nazir, it is not legally binding. In the case of Shimshon, it was the angel who said that he would be a Nazir, and that is certainly not binding. An angel has no say in the matters of a Jewish person's life.

Although these oaths were not binding, they were enough to start them off being a Nazir in practice, as Chana and Tzlalponis brought them up as Nazirs, based on Chana's oath and the words of the angel. However, it was only when they they reached the age of thirteen, the age of adulthood, and they continued the practice of being a Nazir on their own, that affirmed the statements of Chana and the angel, making them binding.

Now we can understand how the debate about the blessing fits in. What is greater the one who says it or the one who affirms? Was Chana's and the angel's statements greater, or was Shmuel's and Shimshon's affirmation greater? In this case, we see that the affirmation is greater.

The same is true for Rabbi Elazar's teaching. Why does he refer to the students of the sages? Why not the sages themselves? Because by the students following in the ways of the sages, they are affirming, which, like we explained earlier, is greater.

The Haftora continues with Manoach asking the man to stay and eat. "I will prepare a goat for you." The angel refused, saying, "I will not eat your food." Manoach didn't know that it was an angel. He asked, "What is your name, so when your words come to be, we



will honor you." The angel responded, "It is a secret." Manoach then offered the goat as a sacrifice to Hashem, and the angel wondrously produced a fire while Manoach and Tzlalponis looked on. As the flame rose upward to heaven the angel went up in the flame, while they looked on. They then fell on their faces, realizing finally that the man was actually an angel of Hashem.

Seeing all this Manoach said to his wife, "We are going to die because we saw G-d."

Tzlalponis responded, "If Hashem wanted to kill us, He wouldn't have accepted from our hand a burnt offering, and He wouldn't have shown us all these things, and at this time He would not let us hear (things) like these."

The first two things that Tzlalponis said to calm her husband's fears make sense, however the third brings up questions.

First, she said, that "if Hashem wanted to kill us, He wouldn't have accepted from our hand a burnt-offering." Being that Hashem accepted their offering, and in a miraculous way, as the angel wondrously produced a fire, it clearly means that Hashem doesn't want them to die, but rather to live.

Her second response came to answer Manoach's fear that seeing Hashem would cause them to die. She said, "He wouldn't have shown us all these things." Meaning, that it was Hashem Who chose to show Himself to us, we didn't go and seek to gaze inappropriately. Hashem can do anything, He could choose that a physical body should see him and live.

What is difficult to understand is her third proof, "He wouldn't have let us hear (things) like these." Once she brought a proof from seeing Hashem, which is superior to hearing Him, what does hearing add? If with seeing Hashem they will live, surely after hearing Him they will live. On top of that, Manoach only was afraid because he saw Hashem, he didn't seem concerned about hearing Him, so how does her answer allay his fears?

We must conclude that there is a type of hearing that is superior to seeing, and that is what she was referring to.

Because we live in a physical world, it is natural to see the physical, in other words, the physical is real to us. On the other hand, G-dliness is only heard, meaning that we could understand it, but it is vague, it doesn't have the same real impression as the physical world that we can see.

When we received the Torah at Mount Sinai it says that we "saw the sounds." The Midrash tells us that according to Rabbi Akiva, we saw what was heard and we heard what was seen. In other words, G-dliness which is usually heard, and does not feel so real to us, was seen, it felt real. Because of this, their perception of the physical world changed, now they heard the G-dliness in the physical. Seeing G-dliness is amazing, but experiencing G-dliness in the physical is by far greater.

Manoach and Tzlalponis had an experience similar to the giving of the Torah. And her third response should be understood like this, "At this time," after this amazing experience, if He wanted us to die, "He would not let us hear (things) like these, "He wouldn't continue to have us experience the G-dliness in everything.

The Haftora concludes with Shimshon being born and that the spirit of Hashem would come to him, meaning, that he would receive prophecy.

We aren't told much about Tzlalponis, her name isn't even mentioned in the Tanach, but from the Haftora we gather that she was a great woman. The angel appeared to her twice, the second time when she was in the field. Why does it have to tell us where she was? What difference does it make to know that she was in the field? Being in the field, in Tanach is code for davening. It is telling us that she was a davener and close to Hashem. From her answers to Manoach, we understand that she was wise. Finally,

she gave birth to the mighty Shimshon, who was a prophet, a Tzadik, he was one of the Judges and led the Jewish people for 22 years. The Talmud records her name together with the names of Avraham and David's mothers who were special women. Why are their names not recorded in the Tanach? Perhaps because the essence of who they were was total selflessness, providing for their babies, Avraham, David, and Shimshon to become the first Jew, the quintessential king, who is the father of Moshiach and the one who was given miraculous strength to single-handedly save the Jewish people from the Philistines. It was not about them; to show that, their names aren't mentioned. The name Tzlalponis could be divided into two words, tzlal, which means clear, and ponis, which means facing towards. Because I have gained much respect for her preparing this article, I would venture to say that it means that she was clear of sin and that she faced Hashem, meaning, that her focus in her life was Hashem.

About Manoach we know very little. From the Haftora we know that he was from the tribe of Dan, that Hashem answered his prayers, he had the good trait of giving thanks (hakaras hatov), he was extremely G-d fearing, and he had a great wife.

Just as we read in this Haftora how Hashem provided the one who could save the Jewish people, may he once again send the one who could redeem us from this dark exile, Moshiach. The time has come.

Dedicated to my son Mendel who is celebrating his birthday this week. May you have a Shnas Hatzlacha, and be a source of nachas to Hashem, the Rebbe, your teachers, your parents, and especially to yourself.

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi,

Two years ago, I took a trip from S. Francisco down to LA with my Chabad, and you were one of our stops. It was so cool and inspiring to meet you and spend time with you.

You really connected with us, even asking us how the San Francisco Giants are doing!

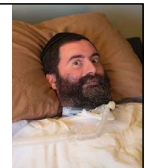
I continue to follow your story now, and look for your messages of hope and inspiration

Thank you"

- Ethan R, San Francisco

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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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