

## Reaching into Avshalom's Final Thoughts as He Hung by his hair Between Heaven and Earth

In this week's parashah we learn about the wondrous concept of Nezirus. We begin our thought with a story related in the Gemore (Nedorim 9a) about a unique individual who took upon himself the vow to become a Nazir.

**"תניא אמר שמעון הצדיק, מימי לא אכלתי אשם נזיר טמא אלא אחד. פעם אחת בא אדם אחד נזיר מן הדרום, וראיתיו שהוא יפה עינים וטוב רואי, וקוצותיו סדורות לו תלתלים. אמרתי לו, בני מה ראית להשחית את שערך זה הנאה.**

**אמר לי רועה הייתי לאבא בעירי, הלכתי למלאות מים מן המעיין, ונסתכלתי בבבואה שלי, ופחז עלי יצרי ובקש לטורדני מן העולם. אמרתי לו, רשע למה אתה מתגאה בעולם שאינו שלך, במי שהוא עתיד להיות רמה ותולעה, העבודה שאגלחך לשמים. מיד עמדתי ונשקתיו על ראשו, אמרתי לו בני כמוך ירבו נוזרי נזירות בישראל, עליך הכתוב אומר איש כי יפליא לנדור נדר נזיר להזיר לה."**

Shimon Hatzaddik said that except for one time, he never ate from the "asham" offering of a contaminated Nazir. That one time, a Nazir came from the south, and Shimon Hatzaddik saw how attractive a person this man was; he had beautiful eyes, a nice complexion, and long, flowing hair. Shimon Hatzaddik asked the person why he was cutting off his beautiful hair. (Part of the Nezirus process is to cut the hair and place the shorn locks near the mizbei'ach).

The Nazir answered that he was serving as a shepherd for his father and tending to the flock. When he went to fill water from the fountain he saw his own reflection and felt the yetzer hara coming upon him to remove him from this world. He then rebuked himself that he was becoming haughty, and to counteract the haughtiness he swore that he would cut his hair for the sake of Hashem [through the process of Nezirus].

Shimon Hatzaddik stood up and kissed him and proclaimed, "There should be more Nezirim like you."

Rashi explains that the yetzer hara of immorality was what the man had felt:

**"ופחז יצרי עלי, מתוך שראיתי צורתני כל כך נאה, נתגבר עלי יצרי וביקש להביאני לידי מעשים רעים לטורדני מן העולם."**

The Maharsha argues with Rashi and explains that it was actually the yetzer hara of haughtiness that the Nazir had felt. He explains that when the Gemore gives us the detail that the man "came from the south," it is informing us that the man was intelligent - south being a euphemism for smart, as the Gemore says (Bava Basra 25:b): **"הרוצה להחכים ידרים"** – "If you want to be smart daven towards south".

When the man saw in the fountain that he was physically attractive, the Gemore is alluding to the fact that the yetzer hara tried to convince him that a person possessing both wisdom and an attractive appearance should not be a lowly shepherd for his father. The words "the yetzer hara coming upon him to remove him from this world" is a hint that he felt he should not be working for his father, for someone who listens to his father is rewarded with longevity of years, and here he was being coerced into not listening to his father, which would result in a shortening of his years in this world.

The Maharsha adds on cryptically that this is part of the story of Avshalom, who had beautiful hair and rebelled against his father.

The Maharsha is slightly difficult to understand. From the simple reading of the Gemore it appears as if he was trying to cut off his hair and rid himself of the yetzer hara, but

nothing is mentioned about the idea of the yetzer hara trying to coerce him into sinning against his father. From where does he get the notion that this Nazir had any intentions whatsoever about sinning against his father?

Additionally, where do we see anything in this story to indicate that it is about Avshalom?

### Avshalom and Dovid Hamelech

To explain this let us take a spiritual trip into the mystical world of gilgulei neshomos – recantation, one of the great revelations by the great mekubel the Ramah MiPano [who learned from his Rebbi, R' Yisroel Srug, who was a student of the Arizal], that the Nazir in the story of Shimon Hatzaddik was a gilgul of Avshalom.

The Gemore (Nazir 4b) states that Avshalom was a Nazir Olam, an eternal Nazir (this specific type of Nazir can cut his hair once every year).

The Gemore (Sotah 9b) teaches us that Avshalom was impressed with his hair and that in truth (Sotah 10a) his hair was the root cause of his rebellion against his father.

**”אבשלום בשערו מרד שנאמר (שמואל ב יד כה) וכאבשלום לא היה איש יפה בכל ישראל וגו', ובגלחו את ראשו והיה מקץ ימים לימים אשר יגלח כי כבד עליו וגלחו, ושקל את שער ראשו מאתים שקלים באבן המלך.”**

The Ramah MiPano added that the Nazir from the south who was a gilgul of Avshalom had the hair of Adam Harishon.

The fear that gripped the Nazir in the story with Shimon Hatzaddik was a result of his fear that he would fail again, as he had in his previous gilgul as Avshalom. He sensed that the yetzer hara was trying to make him fail once more, and his method of guarding himself was to take the vow of Nezirus.

The Gemore in Sotah (10a) says: **”תנו רבנן חמשה נבראו מעין דוגמא של מעלה, וכולם לקו בהם, שמשון בכוחו, שאול בצווארו, אבשלום בשערו, צדקיה בעיניו, אסא ברגליו.”**

Five people were created with an “aspect of similarity to the One Above,” and they all were punished with those very characteristics. The original failure by Avshalom was caused through his hair. To understand this Gemore we look to the

Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer, which seems to be exactly the same as the Gemore, but adds on the words “were created similar to Adam Harishon.”

The Radal explains that the words of the Gemore, “aspect of similarity to the One Above,” are in unison with the words of the Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer, for Adam Harishon before the sin was perfect, similar to Hashem.

Every one of these five people had a quality that they received from Adam when he was on the highest level of spirituality, before the sin.

### Maharsha and the Meaning of Reflection

With these introductions we can begin to understand the Maharsha, who alluded to the concept brought by the Ramah MiPano.

Shimon Hatzaddik recognized the greatness of the Nazir before him. He therefore asked why the Nazir wanted to cut off his beautiful hair.

The Nazir answered that he had sensed in himself that he was a gilgul of Avshalom and that he was being led astray by the yetzer hara to rebel against his father, just like Avshalom had done to his father, Dovid HaMelech.

The words **”בבואה שלי,”** which we explained as “reflection” can be used as “reincarnation.” Therefore, we can add that when the Gemore quoted the Nazir as saying, “when I had gone to fill the water I noticed my reflection,” it actually means that when he noticed his “hair,” (in the reflection from the water) it meant he realized it was from Adam Harishon since he was a gilgul of Avshalom who had the hair of Adam Harishon.

The Nazir had recognized how the yetzer hara was coming to “him to remove him from this world” and have him fail again and rebel against his father, just as Avshalom had done to his father Dovid. Thus he vowed to become a Nazir, and because his intentions were so pure Shimon Hatzaddik stood up and kissed him.

### Nazirus and the Eitz Hadaas

Let us continue our wonderful voyage to explain what Shimon Hatzaddik said after he stood up and kissed the

"בני כמוך ירבו נזירי בישראל, עליך הכתוב אומר: Nazir: "there should be more nazirim like you, and upon you the verse says a man who makes a Nezirus vow for Hashem." With the words of the Shelah Hakadosh we can better explain those special words the Gemore quoted from Shimon Hatzaddik.

The Shelah Hakadosh writes:

"אחר כך נסמכה פרשת נזיר, ואמרו רז"ל (ברכות סג.), הרואה סוטה בקלקולה יזיר עצמו מן היין. מכל אשר יעשה מגפן היין לא יאכל, והוא סוד הפרי של אדם היה גפן, וחווה סחטה אשכול של ענבים (ב"ר יט ה) והוא יין המשכר... ומיין שסחטה חווה באה מיתה לעולם, על כן הנזיר על כל נפשות מת לא יבוא.

הנה כתיב אצל הנזיר כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו, כמו שכתוב בכהן (ויקרא כא יב) כי נזר שמן משחת אלקיו עליו, כי הנזיר הוא כמו כהן שלא יטמא למת ונקרא קדוש... והענין כי אלו לא חטא אדם היה גופו קדוש כתנות אור, ועתה נעשה כתנות עור ובשר חומרי, והושם בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה, כי היה ראוי לעבודה כי לא היה זר, ועתה בהתלבשות כתנות עור נעשה זר, עד בוא אהרן שהוא במקום אדם, ונתקן הזרות שבו על ידי שמן משחת קודש...

הנה הנזיר שפורש את עצמו מהיין, כוונתו הוא לילך במופלא, כלומר במה שנתכסה להיות כאדם קודם שחטא, דהיינו היפך התאוה שגרם לאדם להיות נפשט מכתנות אור... וזהו נזר אלקיו עליו, כלומר נכנס בגדר אדם הראשון קודם שחטא שלא היה זר, ואז היה נזר אלקיו בלי שום אמצעים כמו הכהן שהוצרך לשמן".

For our purposes we will try to summarize the words of the Shelah Hakadosh that are relevant to the concept of Nezirus:

The concept of the Nazir refraining from drinking wine is based on the teaching that the fruit of the Eitz Hadaas was a grape. Through the sin of eating from the tree, Adam brought death to the world. The Nazir is trying to purify himself to be cleansed from that sin; his first step is to avoid wine.

The Nazir has "A crown [of holiness] on his head" and he becomes similar to a kohen who has an internal holiness.

### The Nazir tries to reach the level of Adam Harishon before he sinned.

With these concepts from the Shelah Hakadosh in mind, we return to the story of Avshalom.

Avshalom took upon himself the vow of a Nazir Olam – an eternal Nazir, because he understood that the roots of his hair were from Adam Harishon, and he wanted to make them holy. He was going to make them into a crown. **"כי נזר אלקיו"** He had failed, and not only were they not a crown, but he had ruined them when he became haughty.

Shimon Hatzaddik recognized the greatness of the Nazir before him (a man from the south who had great wisdom) who was a gilgul of Avshalom, whose hair stemmed from Adam Harishon, and he was trying to win the fight that had begun in Gan Eden.

"בני כמוך ירבו נזירי בישראל, עליך הכתוב אומר איש כי יפליא לנדור נזר להזיר לה" - "there should be more Nazirim like you, and upon you the verse says, 'A man who makes a Nezirus vow for [the sake of] Hashem."

### Avshalom and the Eitz Hadaas

In Shmuel (vol 2 chapter 18), we learn the story of how Avshalom rebelled against his father, and as he was riding his hair became entangled in a branch and the animal he was riding continued on, and Avshalom was left there hanging from the tree until Yoav, the general of Doid, found him and killed him:

"ויקרא אבשלום לפני עבדי דוד, ואבשלום רכב על הפרד, ויבוא הפרד תחת שובך האלה הגדולה, ויחזק ראשו באלה ויתן בין השמים ובין הארץ, והפרד אשר תחתיו עבר, וירא איש אחד ויגד ליואב ויאמר, הנה ראיתי את אבשלום תלוי באלה... ויקח [יואב] שלשה שבטים בכפו ויתקעם בלב אבשלום עודנו חי בלב האלה".

The Gemore (Sota 10a) tells us that after the death of Avshalom, Dovid cried and called him "בני, my son" eight times – seven to take him out of the seven levels of Gehinnom, and the eighth to reattach his body to his head. Others explain the eighth time he called him "בני - my son" was to enable Avshalom to enter into Heaven.

How could the grave crimes committed by Avshalom be appeased merely by his father's uttering of the word "בני?" Avshalom tried to murder his father and rebelled against him; how could a simple cry possibly erase that?

## Dovid and Adam Harishon

I want to suggest a new thought that is based on very deep and holy knowledge from our greatest of great Rabbis and saints from previous generations:

The Midrash (Bamidbar 14:2) teaches us that that Adam Harishon gave years of his life to Dovid. For this gift, Dovid spent his life trying to rectify the sin of Adam Harishon. The Arizal says that the Gemore (Sukkah 26a) says that Dovid never slept more than a minimum because he did not want to taste death, and that was also to rectify the sin of Adam Harishon, which caused death to descend upon mankind.

Many sefarim (אופן הרימון) "תורת חיים" (שם), וב"פלא הרימון" (אופן הרימון) (ג) בשם ספר הפליאה וספר הקנה, וב"ארץ החיים" (תהלים לח) [[ח], use this wonderful foundation to explain the Gemore (Sanhedrin 107:a): "תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל, ראויה היתה לדוד בת – שבע בת אליעם אלא שאכלה פגה" – "Dovid was supposed to be with Bassheva, but his timing was too early".

They point out that the Gemore implies from the wording used by the Gemore that the marriage between Dovid and Bassheva was not an ordinary "match," but was really the reincarnation of their own previous marriage, Dovid being reincarnated from Adam Harishon and Bassheva being reincarnated from Chava.

There is a reason that their marriage produced Shlomo Hamelech, who built the first Beis Hamikdash, and could have completely wiped out the affects of the sin of Adam and Chava. It was destined for perfection and greatness. But because their timing was slightly off, they could not bring forth the complete forgiveness needed to usher in the final, everlasting Beis Hamikdash.

The punishment for the marriage was as Nathan Hanavi warned them, (שמואל ב יב יא): "כה אמר ה' הנני מקים עליך, רעה מביתך." "You will have a bad uprising from within your home." Avshalom, as we have learned, was born and had the hair of Adam Harishon.

Dovid, who was the gilgul of Adam Harishon, produced a child, Avshalom, who had received the hair of Adam Harishon. This was done in order for Avshalom to help Dovid attain forgiveness for the sin of the Eitz Hadaas. Since Dovid took Bassheva, who was the gilgul of Chava, before the proper time, and Avshalom, who had the opportunity but

failed to rectify Adam Harishon's sin due to the haughtiness caused by his hair, they were both led to suffer together.

The punishment of (שמואל ב יב יא): "כה אמר ה' הנני מקים עליך רעה מביתך" of having a child like Avshalom, who rebelled against his father, was fitting. Dovid was greatly pained over Avshalom, who died by being hung from a tree by his hair. As we shall see, together in their pain, Dovid and Avshalom brought about the proper forgiveness.

## Avshalom's Demise

Although Hashem said that Avshalom was the punishment for Dovid, we still have to understand how Avshalom himself failed; what was his thought process to rebel against his father?

The Shelah explains in the name of the Rikanti that "the hair gains its strength from the brain."

Avshalom felt that since Dovid sinned when he took Bassheva, he therefore failed in his mission to attain forgiveness for Adam Harishon and was not qualified to be king.

Avshalom felt that since he had the hair of Adam Harishon, it was up to him to continue this great mission. He himself was going to have the crown of Nezirus, "כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו" as well as the crown of kingship, in order to finish the job at which Dovid had failed.

As Dovid was crying bitterly, he was forgiven for the sin of Bassheva. At the moment Avshalom was hanging from the tree, he came to recognize that he had been unable to accomplish his mission with his hair. The manner of his death showed him how his "hair" was still intertwined with the tree, meaning the Eitz Hadass. His rebellion was supposed to help Dovid be forgiven, because it was Dovid's responsibility to rectify the sin of Adam Harishon – Avshalom was not meant to complete the mission, but rather to help Dovid complete it!

The Gemore (Sotah 10a) teaches us that Avshalom did not cut off his hair and free himself from the tree because when he took the sword to do so, he saw Gehinnom open before him. "שקל ספסירא בעא למיפסקיה, תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל באותה שעה נבקע שאול מתחתיו"

The Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer expounds on this Gemore:

”ואבשלום גיבור כח היה במלחמה וחרב מצומדת על מתניו, ומפני מה לא שלף את חרבו וכתת את שער ראשו וירד, אלא שראה שנפתחה גיהנם תחתיו, אמר מוטב לי לתלות בשערי ולא לגיהנם, לפיכך היה תלוי שנאמר הנה ראיתי את אבשלום תלוי באלה.”

Avshalom saw Gehinnom open before him as he was about to cut off his hair and said that “it is better that I hang with my hair than enter Gehinnom.”

### Avshalom's Confession

Where can we find a writer who dares to put into words what went through Avshalom's mind; what was he thinking as he was hanging between Heaven and Earth by his hair from a tree? He was holding a sword, and the only thing between his escape and certain death was to simply cut his hair off. Still, he didn't do it, because Gehinnom loomed before him.

In spiritual terms, he was “hanging between Heaven and Earth by his hair,” for he had the choice to accept the Judgment from above and gain eternal life, or cut his hair and save his physical life.

When he recognized the connection between his hair and the tree and the history behind both, he accepted the Judgment and repented in the true form. He saw the ways of the world and where he had erred, as well as where he now had the chance to fix up his mistake.

As we stated above, when Dovid heard of his son's death, he cried and called him “my son” eight times, to take him out of Gehinnom and bring him into Heaven. Dovid felt that he was the cause of Avshalom's sin; he created the environment that led to Avshalom losing his direction.

Dovid, who came from Adam Harishon, felt that the history of the sin of the Eitz Hadaas is what started this entire spiraling of events leading to his son's demise, including his wrongdoing in approaching Bassheva before the proper time. Avshalom inherited the hair and lost his way, but it all began with Dovid. Every action a father takes directly affects his children too. Dovid said “my son” to imply that he himself was the cause of Avshalom's sin. Therefore, he prayed to release his son from Gehinnom.

This again shows us how wonderful and mystical are the ways of Hashem and how little we humans understand like Dovid HaMelech says (Tehilim 92:7): **”מה גדלו מעשיך: ה' מאד עמקו מחשבותיך, איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את זאת.”** But nevertheless we must thrive and never tire to dig into the Torah to taste the sweetness and endless depths of Torah.



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