

## The Kedushah of the Nazir According to Our Holy Rabbis

### The Nazir Resembles a King Who Reigns over His Urges and Desires and Is Kadosh Like a Kohen Gadol and Like Adam HaRishon before the Sin

In this week's parsha, parshas Nasso, we learn about one of the most mysterious mitzvot in the Torah—the vows of a “nazir.” In the merit of his vow, the Torah praises him in the following terms (Bamidbar 6, 7): “נזר אלקיו על ראשו, כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא לה” — **the crown of G-d is upon his head; all the days of his status as a nazir, he is holy to Hashem.** Hence, it is only fitting that we explore the lessons to be learned from this unique mitzvah, as revealed to us by our holy Rabbis, zy”a; let us be guided by their light. Here are the pesukim from the Torah pertaining to this mitzvah (ibid. 6, 1):

“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם, איש או אשה כי יפליא לנדור נזר להזיר לה', מיינן ושכר יזיר, חומץ יין וחומץ שכר לא ישתה... כל ימי נזרו מכל אשר יעשה מגפן היין מחרצנים ועד זג לא יאכל. כל ימי נזר תער לא יעבור על ראשו, עד מלאות הימים אשר יזיר לה'. קדוש יהיה גדל פרע שער ראשו. כל ימי הזירו לה' על נפש מת לא יבוא, לאביו ולאמו לאחיו ולאחותו לא יטמא להם במותם, כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו, כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא לה'.”

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, “Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: A man or a woman who shall set himself apart by taking the vow of a nazir to set himself apart to Hashem; from wine and hard drink shall he abstain, and he shall not drink vinegar of wine or vinegar of hard drink . . . All the days of his status as a nazir, anything made from wine grapes, from pips to skin, he shall not eat. All the days of his vow as a nazir, a razor shall not pass over his head; until the completion of the days that he will be a nazir for the sake of Hashem, holy shall it be; the growth of hair on his head shall grow. All the days of his being a nazir for the sake of Hashem, he shall not come near a dead person. To his father or to his mother, to his brother or to his sister—he shall not make himself tamei by them upon their death, for the crown of his G-d is upon his head. All the days of his status as a nazir he is holy to Hashem.

In his commentary, Rashi cites the Gemara (Berachos 63a): “למה נסמכה פרשת נזיר לפרשת סוטה, לומר לך שכל הרואה סוטה בקלוקלה יזיר” — **why was the passage of the nazir juxtaposed to the passage of the sotah? To tell you that anyone who sees a sotah in her state of disgrace, should take upon himself to abstain from wine.** Further on, he adds: “נזר נזיר, אין נזירה בכל מקום אלא פרישה, אף כאן שפירש מן היין. להזיר לה', להבדיל” — **in all places, the root נזר denotes only separation; here, too, it denotes that he separated himself from wine.** “To set himself apart to Hashem”: to separate himself from wine for the sake of Heaven. Rashi teaches us a fundamental principle. The vow of a nazir is motivated by his desire to separate himself from wine—which is one of the salient symbols of lust and desire in this world.

#### He Wears the Crown of G-d—Creation's Royal Crown

Let us present the remarkable comment of the Even Ezra. He explains the significance of the Torah's description: “כי נזר -- אלקיו על ראשו, כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא לה” — **for the crown of his G-d is upon his head. All the days of his status as a nazir he is holy to Hashem.** Since he successfully reigns over his worldly lusts and desires, and has separated himself from them, he is worthy of wearing the royal crown of creation. Here are his precise words: “ידוע כי כל בני אדם עבדי תאוות העולם, והמלך באמת שיש -- לו נזר ועטרת מלכות בראשו, כל מי שהוא חפשי מן התאוות” — **know that all people are slaves to the desires of this world; the true king, who wears a royal crown on his head, is any person who is free of desires.**

Let us elaborate and delight in the words of the Even Ezra. Examining the purpose of creation, we find that man was created so that he would rule over nature rather than be controlled by nature. The Torah expresses this notion as follows (Bereishis 1,

28): “ויברך אותם אלקים ויאמר להם אלקים פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ וכבשוה:” **G-d blessed them and G-d said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the sky, and every living thing that moves on the earth.”** For, a person who cannot control his earthly desires is essentially a slave to the frivolous whims of this world; they dominate his existence.

Hence, HKB”H warns us (Vayikra 25, 55): **“כי לי בני ישראל—עבדים עבדי הם אשר הוצאתי אותם מארץ מצרים אני ה' אלקיכם—for Bnei Yisrael are slaves to Me, they are My slaves, whom I have taken out of the land of Mitzrayim; I am Hashem, your G-d.** We find the following elucidation in the Gemara (Kiddushin 22b): **“כי לי בני ישראל עבדים, ולא עבדים לעבדים”—Bnei Yisrael should not be slaves to slaves.** In other words, they should not be slaves to matters of this world, which are themselves controlled by the Almighty. For, we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 6, 12): **“כל מה שברא הקב”ה בעולמו, לא בראו אלא לכבודו”—everything that HKB”H created in His world, He created solely for His own glory.**

This is also the message conveyed by the following Mishnah (ibid. 2): **“שאינו לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה”—there is no truly free man other than one who engages in Torah-study.** The Gemara (Kiddushin 30b) teaches us that the kedushah of the Torah serves as an antidote for the yetzer hara. Thus, it enables a person to free himself of the shackles of his worldly cravings. Furthermore, the Midrash (B.R. 1, 1) teaches us that HKB”H created the universe with the Torah. Thus, one who is connected to the Torah is able to reign over the elements of creation, which HKB”H created with the Torah.

In this manner, we have gained a better understanding of the Even Ezra’s comment regarding the nazir, who separates himself from worldly matters. Whereas all men are slaves to their lusts and desires, he is truly a king, because he has freed himself of this enslavement: **“The crown of His G-d rests on his head.”** Since he controls his natural urges and desires, HKB”H crowns him; he reigns over nature like a king rules over his servants and subjects.

Let us explain the use of the term “Elokim” in the passuk-- **“נזר אלקיו”—based on what we learn from the Pardes Rimonim (17, 4), authored by the divine kabbalist, the Ramak. The laws of nature emanate from the name אלהים, whose numerical value equals הטב”ע—referring to the realm of nature. Now, as explained, the nazir reigns over the natural order, which**

prevails in Olam HaZeh. Therefore, HKB”H, who conducts the natural realm--**הטב”ע—via the name אלהים, endows him with a royal crown to rule over nature, as implied by the passuk: כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו.** This is the message conveyed by the elucidation in the Gemara (Moed Katan 16b) regarding the passuk (Shmuel II 23, 3): **“צדיק מושל יראת אלקים - מי מושל בי צדיק, שאני גוזר גזירה”—“the tzaddik rules through the fear of Elokim” . . . Who rules over Me? the tzaddik; for I issue a decree, and he annuls it.** Seeing as he reigns over **הטב”ע**, which equals אלהים, he possesses the ability to mitigate the force of “din” emanating from the name Elokim.

Based on this idea, we can propose an explanation as to why Torah scholars are referred to as kings. It states in the Gemara (Gittin 62a): **“מנא לך דרבנן איקרו מלכים, דכתיב (משלי ח-טו) בי מלכים—“from where do you derive that Rabbis are referred to as kings? For it is written (Mishlei 8, 15): “Through me, kings will reign.”** By engaging and laboring in the study of Torah—the antidote to the yetzer hara—they control and rule over all the desires of this world. In this merit, HKB”H appoints them as kings over all of creation. This is expressed by the Gemara (Shabbas 128a) as follows: **“כל ישראל בני מלכים הם”—all Yisrael are the children of kings.** Due to their status as the children of kings, they strive to prepare themselves to be kings—to reign over the urges and desires of Olam HaZeh.

### A Nazir Has the Status of a Kohen Gadol and Adam HaRishon prior to the Sin

Now, let us delve into the incredible teachings of the holy Alshich and the holy Shela. They enlighten us as to the source of the concept of being a nazir. We shall begin with the explanation of the Alshich. He teaches us that HKB”H wished to teach us that even if a Jew does not descend from a family of kohanim, it is still within his power to sanctify himself and achieve the status of a Kohen Gadol—by separating himself from all earthly matters. As a result of his newly acquired kedushah, he is prohibited from exposing himself to the tumah of a dead person, including his father and mother.

He adds that the kedushah of a nazir is superior to that of a Kohen Gadol in that he voluntarily chose to accept this status upon himself—as opposed to the situation of a Kohen Gadol. For, regarding the Kohen Gadol, it is written (Vayikra 21, 11): **“ועל כל נפשות מת לא יבוא לאביו ולאמו לא יטמא... כי נזר שמן משחת—“he shall not come to any souls of the dead; he shall not make himself tamei for his father or his mother**

... for a crown—the oil of his G-d's anointment—is upon him. According to this passuk, his kedushah results from his anointment with this special oil. Regarding the nazir, however, it simply states: “כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו”—he is awarded the crown without any anointing oil. His kedushah emanates from the fact that he willingly chose to separate himself from all matters of this world, without any oil of anointment.

Now, from the explanation of the Alshich hakadosh, it is not so apparent as to why the nazir is superior to the Kohen Gadol. So, let us examine the teachings of the Shela hakadosh (Nasso, Torah Ohr 11), who enlightens us with regards to the kedushah of the nazir. The nazir merits sanctifying himself with the kedushah of Adam HaRishon before he drank from the wine of the Eitz HaDa'as, which was a grapevine (according to one opinion). At that point in time, the decree of death—with its attendant tumah—had not yet been imposed upon mankind and all of creation. Therefore, the Torah prohibits him from drinking wine and from spiritually contaminating himself through exposure to the dead. For the sake of clarity, let us examine the words of the holy Shela:

“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, וחזה שחטה אשכול של ענבים (ב”ר יט-ה) והוא יין המשכר... ומיין ששחטה חזה באה מיתה לעולם, על כן הנזיר על כל גפשות מת לא יבוא.

והנה 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 למות וגקרא קדוש. אמנם יש יותר מעלה בנזיר, כי הכהן לא זכה להינזר אלא על ידי שמן המשחה, אבל הנזיר נזר אלקיו עליו...

והענין כי אילו לא חטא אדם היה גופו קדוש כתנות אור, ועתה נעשה כתנות עור, ובשר חומרי, והושם בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה, כי היה ראוי לעבדה 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 קודם שחטא, דהיינו היפך התאוה שגרם לאדם להיות נפשט מכתנות אור, והיה על ידי גפן כי גפן היה, והוא אומר הריני נזיר, כלומר אפרוש את עצמי מהתאוות בכל יכולתי... 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.”

Then the passage of the nazir was juxtaposed. Our blessed teachers said that a person who sees a sotah disgraced should abstain from wine; anything that is made from grapes, he should not consume. This is related to the fact that the fruit of Adam was the fruit of the vine; and Chava squeezed

a cluster of grapes; it is intoxicating wine... From the wine squeezed by Chava, death came to the world. Therefore, the nazir is prohibited from being exposed to any dead body.

Now, concerning the nazir, it is written: “The crown of His G-d rests upon his head,” similar to that which is written concerning the kohen: “The crown of the anointing oil of His G-d rests upon him.” For, the nazir resembles the kohen; he should not become tamei through exposure to the dead and he is considered kadosh. In truth, the nazir is superior, because the kohen only merited this separation through the oil of anointment; whereas the nazir took this relationship with G-d upon himself...

Had Adam not sinned, his body would have been holy, resembling a garment of light; instead, it became a garment of skin and physical flesh. He was placed in Gan Eden to serve it and protect it, because he was worthy to perform the service; he was not a layman. Now that he is enclothed by a covering of skin, he has become a layman (an outsider)—until Aharon came and filled Adam's position. He corrected the layman status of man by means of the holy anointing oil...

Now, the nazir that separates himself from wine, his intention is to live a superior life. In other words, he chooses to be like Adam prior to the sin—not surrendering to the desires which caused Adam to forsake his garment of light, which was facilitated by the fruit of the vine. He proclaims that he is a nazir; in other words, “I am separating myself from all desire to the best of my ability”... This is the significance of the description: “The crown of His G-d is upon him.” Namely, he has achieved the status of Adam HaRishon before he sinned, when he was not an outsider. At that point in time, he was the crown of His G-d without any intermediaries—such as the kohen, who required the oil.

### Adam HaRishon Was a Kohen Gadol

Like a loyal servant grasping onto his master's coattails, I would like to expand on his holy explanation, based on what we have learned in the Midrash Tanchuma (Bechukosai 3): “נתאוה הקב”ה כשם שיש לו דירה למעלה שיהא לו כך דירה למטה, שכך הוא אומר לאדם הראשון, אם זכית, כשם שאני מלך על העליונים כך אעשה אותך מלך HKB”H על התחתונים... והוא לא עשה כן אלא כיון שחטא סילק שכינתו ממנו.” desired that just as he has a dwelling above, he should have a dwelling below. Thus, He said to Adam HaRishon: “If you are meritorious, just as I am King of the heavenly





”וכי ימות מת עליו בפתע פתאום וטמא ראש נזרו, וגילח ראשו ביום טהרתו ביום השביעי יגלחנו, וביום השמיני יביא שתי תורים או שני בני יונה אל הכהן אחד פתח אהל מועד, ועשה הכהן אחד לחטאת ואחד לעולה וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש וקדש את ראשו ביום ההוא, והזיר לה' את ימי נזרו והביא כבש בן שנתו לאשם והימים הראשונים יפלו כי טמא נזרו“.

**“If a person should die near him unexpectedly, all of a sudden, and make his nazirite head tamei, he shall shave his head on the day he becomes tahor; on the seventh day shall he shave it. On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young doves to the Kohen, to the entrance of the Ohel Moed. The Kohen shall make one as a ‘chatat’ and one as an ‘olah,’ and he shall provide him atonement for having sinned regarding the soul; and he shall sanctify his head on that day. He shall dedicate to Hashem the days of his status as a nazir, and he shall bring a sheep in its first year for an ‘asham’; and the first days shall fall aside, for his status as a nazir had been made tamei.”**

Regarding this, we have learned in the Gemara (Taanis 11a): **”אמר שמואל כל היושב בתענית נקרא חוטא, סבר כי האי תנא דתניא רבי אלעזר הקפר ברבי אומר, מה תלמוד לומר וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש, וכי באיזה נפש חטא זה, אלא שציער עצמו מן היין, והלא דברים קל וחומר, ומה זה שלא ציער עצמו אלא מן היין נקרא חוטא, המצער עצמו מכל דבר ודבר על אחת כמה וכמה“.** Shmuel said: **Whoever fasts is called a sinner. He shared the viewpoint of this particular Tanna; for it was taught in a Baraita: Rabbi Elazar HaKappar “the eminent” says: Why does the Torah state: “And he will make atonement for him, for that he sinned concerning the soul”? And concerning which soul has the nazir sinned? Rather, he is called a sinner, because he has distressed himself by abstaining from wine. Now, do these matters not lend themselves to a “kal vachomer”: If this person who deprived himself only of wine is called a sinner, then a person who deprives himself of all things (by fasting), how much more so!**

The Alshich hakadosh is perplexed by this statement. After all, this passuk: **”וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש“** pertains only to the nazir who became tamei through sudden exposure to a corpse. So, how is it possible to suggest that he brings a korban for atonement for the fact that he distressed himself by abstaining from wine? If that were the case, even a nazir who did not become tamei, who completed the term of his nazirite vow, should be required to bring a korban for atonement for distressing himself by abstaining from wine. Furthermore, not only is he not called a sinner, but he is even referred to as being kadosh, as it is written: **”כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו, כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא“**

**“לה-- the crown of G-d is upon his head; all the days of his status as a nazir, he is holy to Hashem.**

## **One Who Abstains from Enjoying the Foods Created by HKB”H Is Called a Sinner**

The Alshich hakadosh explains the matter. In truth, HKB”H created all the delicacies of this world for the benefit and pleasure of human beings. He did so, however, on the condition that the ultimate goal and purpose of their consumption would be to sustain and support the living soul—not for the purpose of excesses and cravings. Therefore, it is not permissible for a person to torment himself by not partaking of the delicacies of Olam HaZeh. So, if he fasts or causes himself unnecessary suffering, he is considered a sinner.

To understand to what extent this principle applies, let us present what we have learned in the Talmud Yerushalmi (end of Kiddushin 48b): **”עתידין אדם ליתן דין וחשבון על כל שראת עינו ולא עתיד אדם ליתן דין וחשבון על כל שראת עינו ולא אכל“—a person is destined to be held accountable for all that his eye beheld and he did not eat.** The Pnei Moshe explains: because he does not make an effort to obtain them, to recite a berachah and to thank Hashem for these various species that He created in order to sustain mankind; it is as if he does not appreciate Hashem’s kindness.

The Yerushalmi concludes: **”רבי לעזר חשש להדא שמועתא, ומצמיח—Rabbi Leizer heeded this lesson; he would accumulate small sums of money in order to purchase many different types of fruit; he would eat of each type of fruit once a year. In light of this teaching, how can we define kedushah as separation from matters of this world?”**

However, if his intention is to divorce himself from the pleasures of this world **”l’shem shamayim,”** to atone for a transgression and the like, his deprivation is viewed as if he sacrificed a korban to Hashem; it is accepted gladly for the sake of his atonement. This only holds true, however, on the condition that he completed the term of his nazirite vow. For, HKB”H watched over him, so that he would not be exposed to corpse tumah. This is proof positive that the vow he took upon himself, to abstain from wine and from all the pleasures of this world, was desirable to Hashem.

Yet, if the nazir became tamei by sudden, unexpected exposure to a corpse; and he was not shielded from above from becoming tamei via corpse tumah; it is definite proof that his nazirite vow was not accepted absolutely, without reservations.

Therefore, he requires atonement for sinning against his living soul by distressing himself through deprivation from wine. It became evident that HKB”H did not desire his act of separation from matters of Olam HaZeh.

## Sparks of Kedushah in Our Food and Drink

Let us elaborate on the idea of the Alshich hakadosh based on a concept described at length by our teacher, the Arizal, in Shaar HaKavanot (Eikev). The purpose of eating is to clarify sparks of kedushah—“nitzotzei kedushah”—found within the food. The Baal Shem Tov hakadosh, zy”a, adds a grand idea. HKB”H actually makes certain foods available specifically to each individual—those that contain the sparks relevant to him personally. Here is his explanation presented in the sefer Baal Shem Tov (Yisro 26) regarding the passuk (Tehillim 107, 5):

“רעבים גם צמאים נפשם בהם תתעטף. פירש בכאן סוד גדול ונורא, והוא למה ברא הקב”ה עניני מאכל ומשתה, שאדם תאב להם לאכול ולשתות, והטעם שהם ממש ניצוצי אדם הראשון שהם מתלבשים בדומם ובצומח ובמדבר, ויש להם חשק לדבק בקדושה... וכל אכילה ושתייה שאדם אוכל ושותה, הוא ממש חלק ניצוצות שלו שהוא צריך לתקן”.

**“Hungry and also thirsty, their soul became faint within them.” Here he explains an awesome and tremendous principle. Why did HKB”H create matters of food and drink that man would crave to eat and drink? The reason is because they are the actual sparks of Adam HaRishon that are disguised within the inanimate, plant, animal and human realms. They yearn to attach themselves to kedushah... Every food and drink that a person consumes actually contains his own sparks that he is obligated to bring to tikun.**

HKB”H intentionally created man so that he could not exist without food or drink. For, concealed within the food and drink are holy sparks relevant to and belonging to a person’s soul. By consuming the food and drink for the sake of Heaven and reciting the appropriate Berachos with proper intent, a person rectifies and elevates the sparks contained in them.

This enables us to achieve a greater understanding of a statement from Chazal. They address that which is stated concerning the korban brought by the nazir that becomes tamei: “וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש - וכי באיזה נפש חטא זה, אלא שציער עצמו” מן היין. The fact that he becomes tamei and is unsuccessful at completing the term of his nazirite vow, is a sign that he is not on

a high enough spiritual level to divorce himself from matters of this world and to sanctify himself with the kedushah of a Kohen Gadol. Therefore, he requires atonement for not drinking wine and failing to elevate the sparks relevant to his soul. This is the message inherent in the passuk: **“And he shall provide him atonement for having sinned regarding the soul.”** The Gemara explains: **“And concerning which soul has the nazir sinned? Rather, he is called a sinner, because he has distressed himself by abstaining from wine.”** He has caused himself personal distress--“עצמו” specifically. For, he has distressed the sparks relevant to his own soul by not drinking wine.

Now, all of this only applies to a nazir who becomes tamei and wipes out the days of his vow. This is not the case regarding a nazir who is protected by Heaven and does not become tamei. His success proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that his intentions to separate from earthly matters were desirable. The Alshich described his circumstance as follows: **“למען תחול—עליו קדושה על ידי בחירתו והתקרבו לה” so that kedushah would permeate his being due to his choice and his drawing nearer to Hashem.** As a result, he will subsequently be able to sanctify himself to an even greater degree by eating and drinking solely for the sake of Hashem. Attesting to the fact that this nazir succeeded in attaining the kedushah of a Kohen Gadol, the passuk states: **“כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו, כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא” -- the crown of G-d is upon his head; all the days of his status as a nazir, he is holy to Hashem.**

Here is what we have accomplished. Let us combine what we have learned about the kedushah of a nazir from the enlightening teachings of the three-stranded cord—the Even Ezra, the Alshich hakadosh and the Shela hakadosh. We can formulate an explanation regarding the purpose of the mitzvah of becoming a nazir. The nazir yearns to separate himself from all matters of Olam HaZeh, so that he can return to the status of Adam HaRishon prior to the sin, as explained by the Shela hakadosh. By doing so, he becomes qualified to wear the crown of creation, as the passuk depicts: **“כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו”—the crown of G-d rests upon his head.** He is truly a king, because he is unfettered by the shackles of desire that bind us and impede us in Olam HaZeh, as explained by the Even Ezra. As a result, he achieves the status of a Kohen Gadol, who is prohibited from becoming tamei even to his father and mother.

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