



The Community

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Weekly Newsletter Published by The Jewish Center - Chabad of North Miami

Boruch Hashem

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Vol. 26, No. 32

Rabbi's Article

Greater is the Recipient Than the Giver

This week's Torah-portion discusses the laws of the *Nazir* (-Link). The laws of the *nazir* entails that he does not drink wine, cut his hair, nor become impure through the body of a dead person (touching, or being under the same roof with, the body). This applies to both, the *nazir* who takes upon himself to be a *nazir* for a set amount of time (30 days or more), and the *nazir* who takes upon himself to be a *nazir olam* -forever. The difference is that the *nazir olam* may take a haircut (and bring with it the sacrifices necessary) after each 12 months. However, there is a different type of *nazir*, which is not found in the Torah, but in the Prophets (read as this week's haftarah (-Link)): *Samson the Nazir* (-Link). Concerning Samson, the angel told his mother (-Judges 13:5), "*And a razor shall not pass over his head, for a nazir to G-d will the child be from the womb.*" Samson was a *nazir olam*, only that not all the laws of a *nazir* applied to him. Samson was forbidden to drink wine and cut his hair, but not from becoming impure through a dead body.

In the conclusion of Tractate Nazir, the Mishna (-Link) tells us: '*Samuel* (-Link) *was a nazirite, in accordance with the statement of Rabbi Nehorai, as it was stated* (that when Hannah, his mother, prayed for a son, she vowed (-Samuel I 1:11:)) "*And (no) mora shall come upon his head.*' *It is stated with regard to Samson* (-Judges 13:5): '*And (no) razor [mora] (shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a nazirite to G-d), and it is stated: 'And (no) mora,' with regard to Samuel. Just as* (the term) "*mora*" *that is stated with regard to Samson* (means that he was) *a nazirite, so too,* (the term) "*mora*" *that is stated with regard to Samuel* (indicates that he was) *a nazirite. Rabbi Yosei said: But doesn't "mora" (mean) nothing other* (than the *fear*) *of flesh and blood? Rabbi Nehorai said to him: But isn't it already stated* (-Samuel I 16:2): '*And Samuel said: How can I go; if Saul hears it he will kill me.*' (This verse indicates) *that there was fear of flesh and blood upon* (Samuel). (Consequently, the term *mora* must be understood in accordance with its plain meaning of a razor. If so, Samuel was indeed a nazirite.)"

The Tractate concludes: "*Rav said to his son Chiyya: 'Seize and recite a blessing.'* *And similarly, Rav Huna said to his son, Rabba: 'Seize and recite a blessing.'* *Is this to say that one who recites a blessing is preferable* (to one who answers *amen*)? *But isn't it taught that Rabbi Yosei says: The one who answers amen is greater than the one who recites the blessing? And Rabbi Nehorai said to him: By Heavens, it is so. Know, as the military assistants descend to the battlefield and initiate the war and the mighty follow them and prevail.* (The *amen* that follows a blessing is compared to the mighty who join the war after the assistants and prevail, illustrating that answering *amen* is more significant than reciting the initial blessing. The Talmud responds:) (This) *is* (a dispute between) *tanna'im* (-Link), *as it is taught: Both the one who recites a blessing and the one who answers amen are included* (among those who (-Nehemiah 9:5) "*stand up and bless*"), *but one hurries to first reward the one who recites the blessing.* (Reciting the blessing is greater than answering *amen*.) *Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Chanina said: 'Talmidei Chachomim* ("*Students of Wisdom* (Torah))" *increase peace in the world, as it is stated* (-Isaiah 54:13): '*And all your children shall be taught of the L-rd, and great shall be the peace of your children.*'"

To understand: (a) Rabbi Nehorai's response to Rabbi Yossi, (b) the connection of *amen* versus the blessing itself, and, (c) the closing of the scholars increasing peace, we will have to ask a simple question: Neither the angel, nor Hannah, had the power to create that the unborn Samson or Samuel become nazirites?! The answer is understood from the law of a minor who converts. On the one hand, the Jewish court establishes the conversion, from the aspect of the, "*actions of conversion*," however, it isn't until after the minor's bar/bat mitzvah, that the *minor's* not disclaiming the court's "*actions of conversion*" establishes that what the court did then, *now* becomes a *true* conversion *transformation* within the convert. This is the debate in our Mishna: Rabbi Yossi states that Samson and Samuel, as adults, by not disclaiming what the angel and Hannah did, they instated, and *quantitatively* added on to the 'nazirite-hood' that the angel and Hanna bestowed upon them prior. Rabbi Nehorai states "*Heaven, it is so!*" that they didn't just instate or quantitatively add on, but rather, with their saying, "*amen*," so to speak, to the, "*blessing*," the angel and Hannah bestowed upon them, they took the "*actions of a nazir*" placed upon them from *Above* (angel; Hanna) to the unprecedented *qualitatively* state of sanctity of a *nazir*. This is why the Talmud brings the dispute concerning the power of the recipient of the blessing answering *amen* (Samson's and Samuel's not disclaiming) over the giver of the blessing itself (angel's and Hannah's proclaiming Samson and Samuel as nazirites).

So too, with the closing of the Tractate speaking of the *Students* (recipients) of *Wisdom*, rather than, the wise (givers) themselves, for the wise represent the teachers of the Mishna (*blessing; Above*), while the students represent the Talmud, extrapolating and dissecting the Mishna. And greater are the students (answering *amen*, absorbing and responding from *Below*), for it is the *Students of Wisdom* who elevate the *Below*, increasing true peace within the world.