



THE RABBI BINYAMIN KAMENETZKY  
TORAH LEGACY FOUNDATION  
לזכרון של הרב בנימין קמנצקי זצ"ל

אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאנצרו של  
הגאון רב בנימן קמנצקי זצ"ל

*A Dvar Torah from the writings of Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l,  
transcribed by his grandson, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky*

## 5779 - Parshas Nasso - Nazir Up

Parshas Nasso discusses the laws of a nazir - one who accepts upon himself to refrain from consuming wine or grape products, and to avoid becoming tamei - spiritually impure by coming in contact with, or in close proximity to, a dead body, thus avoiding the spiritual pitfalls of the mundane world.

The Torah juxtaposes the laws of nazir next to the laws of a sotah, an adulteress who dies through miraculous means as she drinks a cup of water with the name of Hashem dissolved inside. Our sage teach us that "one who sees a sotah in her destruction, will surely absolve himself from drinking wine." **When one sees the downward spiral to which levity, spurred by excessive drinking, can lead, he realizes that the way to prevent this is to take a thirty day break from wine.** He can then arm himself by living spiritually, away from physical pleasures, enabling himself to train his body to rise above temptation.

Yet at the end of the nezirus period, the Torah instructs the Nazir to bring a chatas - a sin offering. The Gemara quotes Rabbi Elazar Hakapar who explains, "One who sits and fasts is called a sinner. **A nazir who refrains from only grapes is considered to have sinned for doing so**, surely one who sits in a fast the entire day is called a sinner!"

Many commentaries explain that one is put in this world in order to utilize the materialistic and physical elements of Earth for his spiritual work, elevating himself and the entire world through his spiritual climb. One who did not take advantage of this is considered to have sinned.

*My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l would repeat the following story to explain this gemara in a different light.*

*The Ostrovtzer Rebbe, Rav Meir Yechiel Holshtok zt"l one of the great Talmidic sages and Jewish leaders in the early 1900's, fasted for almost forty years, devoting his life only in spiritual pursuit. He ate only on Shabbos, as a part of his service of Hashem, honoring our holy day with eating and drinking. He lived on a lofty spiritual level, almost completely cut off from this physical world, and accomplished far beyond what an ordinary person can. He spent his days and nights deeply immersed in Torah study and prayer, while uplifting the members of his community and beyond.*

*One Friday afternoon, on his way to shul before Shabbos, he noticed a familiar wagon driver who was known to be lax in his Shabbos observance, picking up passengers. Realizing that in only a few moments the wagon driver would be desecrating the holy Shabbos, the Rebbe approached him and rebuked him for his carelessness in properly observing Shabbos.*

*The wagon driver was not impressed. "You are calling me a sinner?" he sneered. "You are also a sinner! Doesn't the gemara say that one who fasts is a sinner? You fast every single day! I am only sinning today!" The rebbe didn't flinch as he answered, "The Talmud tells us that one who sits in a fast is a sinner" One who sits, and does not elevate himself through his fasting is surely a sinner. He has no right to avoid food and endanger himself, instead of taking care of himself and serving Hashem. But I fast in order to elevate my soul. I do not sit and fast, but rise in my fasting. A person who fast for that purpose is not a sinner."*

Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l explained that the period of nezirus is meant to uplift a person in his spiritual growth. **He should not stagnate during this period, but he should indeed rise during that period - and beyond.** A nazir who simply does not drink wine over a thirty day period followed the laws of the Torah. But he is still considered a sinner. **Instead of utilizing this period for uplifting himself through his separation from physical pleasure, he wasted his time.** A person has no right to drop from a life of separation back to a life of mundane, without taking a lesson.

**A nazir must take this opportunity for growth, and use it to do just that - to grow.** Yes, he is on a high level for only thirty days, but when he returns back to mundane, he must take the lessons of separation along with him on his journey upward.

### **Good Shabbos!**

*Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky is the Director of Advancement at Yeshiva of South Shore - ישיבה תורת חיים - בית בנימן. He is currently compiling the vast storehouse of all the Torah thoughts from his grandfather. If you have any stories to share from his grandfather, you can email him at [skamenetzky@yoss.org](mailto:skamenetzky@yoss.org).*