



# LT TORAH TO GO



Volume 13 - Issue 37

Edited by Rabbi Mara Nathan on behalf of generations of Torah Learners at Larchmont Temple.

EXPERIENCE TORAH THIS WEEK: May 24-30  
EREV SHABBAT 8:00PM  
SHABBAT AM SERVICE SATURDAY 10:30AM

SHABBAT NASO 5769  
NUMBERS 4:21-7:89  
pp. 1043-1075 in Torah, a Modern Commentary

## **PSHAT...*The plain/simple story***

*Parashat Naso* concludes the census begun in the first chapters of Numbers with a counting of the Gershonites, Merarites, and Kohathites and a description of their work in the sanctuary. It also includes instructions for removing from the Israelites' camp those suspected of disease or those who may have become impure by touching a dead body. Moses explains how to seek forgiveness for wrongdoing and what to do if a husband suspects his wife of adultery. The practices of the Nazirite are repeated together with a description of the ritual for completing a Nazirite vow. The portion concludes with the threefold priestly blessing for the people of Israel and with a description of the offerings brought by the twelve tribal chieftains to the sanctuary dedication ceremony.

## **REMEZ...*Looking for clues***

**KOSHI: *Why be a Nazirite?***

**RASHI...**Nazirite comes from the root *nazir* meaning— to separate oneself or to keep aloof from the ways of the common people.

**MOSHE CHAIM LUZZATO...**This is ideal behavior. As a minority that holds itself aloof from society and does not look beyond its own needs, the *nazir* is an inspiration because he or she chooses to do more than the laws of Torah require.

**RABBI ELEAZAR HA KAPPAR...**The *nazirite* vow is sinful, because one should not deny themselves the enjoyment of life. Why else would the *nazirite* be commanded to give a sin offering at the end of their service?

**ISSERLES...**the *nazirites* are to be praised for realizing that they have a weakness for worldly pleasures and difficulty diverting their evil inclinations from extremes to the middle way.. By taking on the nazirite vow, such people push themselves to excessive self denial and then find the way back to the ideal of moderation..

## **DRASH...*Discovering Meaning...***

**FIELDS...**Perhaps, for moderns, the real lesson to be drawn from the example of the nazirite deals with the challenge of introducing the discipline of “yes, I will” or “no, I will not” into our lifestyles. Temptations of alcohol, drugs, smoking, overworking and overeating are everywhere. Reviewing the Torah’s description of the nazirite vows and practices may offer a powerful symbolic message. For example, the decision to abstain from wine may signal the dangers of addiction and the necessity of cultivating a clear mind. The command against cutting hair may teach that egocentric concerns for how one looks and for fashion and exterior style do not replace inner substance and quality of character. The *nazirite’s* prohibition against touching a dead body may imply not a rejection of the inevitability of death but an acceptance that the most holy or pure occupation is to work for every cause that preserves and promotes life. Unraveling the meaning of the *nazirite’s* vow raises serious questions...for controlling our needs and shaping our desires to benefit ourselves and our community and to serve God.

*Yashar Koach* to this week's B'nei Mitzvah:  
**LUCAS SILVERSTEIN & SARAH YUKELIS**

*Come hear them teach Torah this Saturday at 10:30AM*

### SOD...Finding Ourselves

....Many rabbis support the idea of becoming a Nazirite and the strict laws they must follow. For example, Rabbi Bachya ben Joseph thinks it's a good thing because he feels that "worldly pleasures often lead to excesses". Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto says you should "only use as much as you need" and not eat or drink any more than that. Both of these rabbis have the idea that holding back and not enjoying the pleasures of life is a way to get closer to God.

But, many rabbis do not support the Nazirites and the laws they follow and think this kind of service is a bad thing. For example, Rabbi Eleazer Ha-kappar thinks the Nazirites are sinners and that they "ignore the ten commandments by abstaining from the natural joys of life". Rabbi Yizhak asks, "Aren't the laws of Torah good enough?" Why do the Nazirites feel that they have to follow even more strict laws in addition to the Ten Commandments? Maybe that is why, at the end of the Nazirites commitment they are required to bring a sin offering to God to say that they are sorry for all of their wrongs. These rabbis feel that the Nazirite takes on a "holier than thou" approach to Judaism and their connection to God.

My view on the Nazirites and the laws they follow is that it is not a bad thing to be a Nazirite and be different from other Jews. If the Nazirites don't want to be the same because of the things they believe they should do, I think that it's ok, as long as it's not harming anybody else. Even though they choose to be separate and different from other Jews, they are a community amongst themselves. So even though I understand why many rabbis didn't like this kind of behavior, I think people should be able to worship or believe in God in a way that is meaningful to them.

I like the Nazirites because it's cool how they do their own thing. It's important to be yourself and do things you like or want to do and not just follow everything that other people do.....

**LUCAS SILVERSTEIN**

....In Leviticus 6:8 it says that "all the days of his abstinence he is holy to God." But in 6:12 it states " he shall dedicate to God the days of his abstinence and he shall bring a sheep in its 1<sup>st</sup> year for a guilt offering." Being a nazirite is supposed to make you holy. So why would the nazirite have to make a guilt offering at the end of their service? ....Does the nazirite, who abstains from wine, the cutting of hair, and the touching of corpse, achieve a greater sense of holiness?

Rabbi Bachya ben Joseph explains that, " the commitment of the nazirite leads people to appreciate this modest way of life." This means that as you complete your term as a nazirite you live life with a humble attitude rather than being very conceded and self-centered. However, Rabbi Simeon Federbush states that " being a nazirite separates one from the benefits of life and removes one from striving for perfection of the human race." He argues that "any chain is only as strong as it's weakest link. If one denies oneself to provide for one's own wants, who will take care of the needs of the others? Those who are occupied with ascetic indulgence will have no concern for the needs of their neighbors." Federbush feels that it is bad to be a nazirite because if you become a nazirite you are withholding yourself from the joy and beauty of life. He feels that if you don't give yourself what you need than you will not willing to give others what they need either. I agree with both these rabbis because being a nazirite can help you see the benefits of modest view of the world, but it can also isolate you from every day life. This relates to us as Jews and as people because we can all have our differences and we all strive for different goals, but in the end it is important that we can all come together as a congregation to pray. Being a nazirite is a way for someone to express their view on life but, if one is too engrossed with Judaism, like a nazirite, they can watch the callings of every day life pass by. This portion teaches us not to be too zealous and to learn that there is a fine line between doing something regularly and doing something constantly.

**-SARAH YUKELIS**

### MITZVAH of the WEEK...

**LUCAS** helped at Pet Rescue by socializing newborn abandoned puppies and raising money to buy food and blankets for the dogs that are waiting to be adopted. "My friend, Collin Zucker and I spend many fun hours playing with the dogs and selling snacks and water at Larchmont Mamaroneck youth basketball games. I'm happy to say that all of the puppies from the litter found a new home."

**SARAH** visited elderly at the Portchester Nursing Home. "I talk with residents, and tried to connect with them. When I came there for the first time it was very hard to see so many people who were old and sick because it showed me how life can go by so quickly. It made me realize how short and fragile life is. I wanted to do every possible thing I could do help these people live the rest of their lives enjoyably. This relates to my portion because the nazirites' prohibition against touching a dead body may imply not a rejection of the inevitability of death but an acceptance that the most holy or pure occupation is to work for every cause that preserves and promotes life."