

THE BEAUTY OF HUMILITY

Background

Typically, the concept of *nazirus* in the Torah is used when a person feels tempted to do a particular sin. He would make a vow of *nazirus* to abstain from various activities, one of which was cutting his hair. After the standard thirty days of time, he would shave off all of his hair and bring a *korbon*. Rebbe Shimon HaTzaddik never ate from these *korbonos* because he questioned whether at some time the *nazir* found the vow too difficult and regretted making it, thereby on some level making the *korbon* improper.

This young man was afraid of being overtaken with arrogance; hence, he made a vow of *nazirus*. Rebbe Shimon HaTzaddik was so impressed with the piety and wisdom of this young man that he felt confident that he would never renege on his vow and he was pure.

Questions

The Maharsha explains that this young man was actually a *talmid chacham* and apparently demonstrated greatness and wisdom with this action. Yet the two expressions that this young man said seem inaccurate. His first statement was: “Wicked one, why are you arrogant in a world that isn’t yours?”

What difference does it make whether it was his world or someone else’s? The bottom line is that he was gorgeous. Yet it seems that the fact that it isn’t his world is somehow the reason he shouldn’t be arrogant. The question is: why?

His second statement seems equally inaccurate: “Wicked one, why are you becoming arrogant in a world that isn’t yours in a body that will be eaten by worms.” What difference does it make what will be with his body? Right now, his body was beautiful. What will be in the future is irrelevant now. If right now, he had a positive attribute, why shouldn’t it bring him a sense of superiority?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת נדרים דף ט/ב

דתניא אמר (רבי) שמעון הצדיק מימי לא אכלתי אשם נזיר טמא אלא אחד פעם אחת בא אדם אחד נזיר מן הדרום וראיתיו שהוא יפה עינים וטוב רואי וקווצותיו 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

Rebbe Shimon HaTzaddik said, “In all of my days, I never ate from the korbon (sacrifice) of a nazir, except once. A man came from the south, and I saw that he had beautiful eyes and was very attractive. His long flowing locks were arranged on his shoulders. I said to him, ‘Why do you see fit to destroy your beautiful hair?’ He answered me, ‘I was a shepherd working for my father. When I went to the well to fill a vessel, I glanced at my reflection in the water, and my inner urge (yetzer harah) attempted to get hold of me and cause me to sin [by becoming arrogant.] I said [to myself], ‘Wicked one, why are you becoming arrogant in a world that isn’t yours in a body that will be eaten by worms? My job is to shave off this hair to HASHEM.’”

Rebbe Shimon HaTzaddik said, “I immediately stood up and kissed him on the head and said, ‘My son, may there be many more like you in Yisroel.’”