

Naso 5786

Ramban on Numbers 6:11

AND THE PRIEST SHALL PREPARE ONE FOR A SIN-OFFERING. The reason why a Nazirite must bring a sin-offering *when the days of his Naziritehood are fulfilled* has not been explained. In accordance with the plain meaning of Scripture, [it is because] this man sins against his soul on the day of completion of his Naziritehood; for until now he was separated in sanctity and the service of G-d, and he should therefore have remained separated forever, continuing all his life consecrated and sanctified to his G-d, as it is said, *And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites*, where Scripture compares the Nazirite to a prophet, and as it is written, *All the days of his Naziritehood he is holy unto the Eternal*. Thus [when he completes his Naziritehood and returns to his normal life] he requires atonement, since he goes back to be defiled by [material] desires of the world.

Bavli Taanit 11a

The Gemara returns to the primary topic of the tractate, the issue of fasts. **Shmuel said: Whoever sits in observance of a fast is called a sinner**, as it is inappropriate to take unnecessary suffering upon oneself. The Gemara comments: Shmuel **holds in accordance with the opinion of the following tanna, as it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Elazar HaKappar the Great says: What is the meaning when the verse states**, with regard to a nazirite: **“And he will atone for him for that he sinned by the soul [nefesh]”** (Numbers 6:11). **But with what soul did this nazirite sin? Rather**, the nazirite sinned **by the distress he caused himself when he abstained from wine**, in accordance with the terms of his vow.

Rambam, Hilchot Deot 3:1

A person might say, "Since envy, desire, [the pursuit] of honor, and the like, are a wrong path and drive a person from the world, I shall separate from them to a very great degree and move away from them to the opposite extreme." For example, he will not eat meat, nor drink wine, nor live in a pleasant home, nor wear fine clothing, but, rather, [wear] sackcloth and coarse wool and the like - just as the pagan priests do.

This, too, is a bad path and it is forbidden to walk upon it. Whoever follows this path is called a sinner [as implied by Numbers 6:11's] statement concerning a nazirite: "and he [the priest] shall make an atonement for him, for his having sinned regarding [his] soul." Our sages declared: If the nazirite who abstained only from wine requires atonement, how much more so does one who abstains from everything.

Therefore, our Sages directed man to abstain only from those things which the Torah denies him and not to forbid himself permitted things by vows and oaths [of abstention]. Thus, our Sages stated: Are not those things which the Torah has prohibited sufficient for you that you must forbid additional things to yourself? This general statement also refers to those who fast constantly. They are not following a good path, [for] our Sages have forbidden a man to mortify himself by fasting.

Rambam, Hilchot Nezirut 10:14

When a person says: "I will be a nazirite if I do this and this" or "...if I do not do [this or this]," he is a wicked man and a nazirite vow of this type is one of the nazirite vows taken by the wicked. If, however, a person takes a nazirite vow to God in a holy manner, this is delightful and praiseworthy and concerning this, [Numbers 6:7-8] states: "The diadem of his God is upon his head... He is holy unto God." And Scripture equates him with a prophet, as [Amos 2:11] states: "And from your sons, I will raise [some] as prophets, and from your youths, [some] as nazirites."

Rambam, Hilchot Nedarim 13:23

When a person takes vows in order to establish his character traits and correct his conduct, he is considered eager and praiseworthy. What is implied? If a person was a glutton and he [took a vow] forbidding meat for a year or two, a person was obsessed with wine and he [took a vow] forbidding himself from drinking wine for a prolonged period or he forbade himself from ever becoming intoxicated, a person would continually pursue illicit gain and was overexcited about wealth [took a vow] forbidding [accepting] presents or benefit from people in a particular country, similarly, a person who would be proud of his comely appearance and took a nazirite vow, or the like - all of these are paths in the service of God and concerning such vows and the like our Sages said: "Vows are a safeguard for restraint."

Rambam, Hilchot Deot 2:2

How are they to be healed? We tell the wrathful man to train himself to feel no reaction even if he is beaten or cursed. He should follow this course of behavior for a long time, until the anger is uprooted from his heart.

The man who is full of pride should cause himself to experience much disgrace. He should sit in the lowliest of places, dress in tattered rags which shame the wearer, and the like, until the arrogance is uprooted from his heart and he returns to the middle path,

which is the proper path. When he returns to this middle path, he should walk in it the rest of his life.

One should take a similar course with each of the other traits. A person who swayed in the direction of one of the extremes should move in the direction of the opposite extreme, and accustom himself to that for a long time, until he has returned to the proper path, which is the midpoint for each and every temperament.

Rambam, Hilchot Deot 1:4

For example: he should not be wrathful, easily angered; nor be like the dead, without feeling, rather he should [adopt] an intermediate course; i.e., he should display anger only when the matter is serious enough to warrant it, in order to prevent the matter from recurring. Similarly, he should not desire anything other than that which the body needs and cannot exist without, as [Proverbs 13:25] states: "The righteous man eats to satisfy his soul."

Rambam, Hilchot Deot 1:7

Since the Creator is called by these terms and they make up the middle path which we are obligated to follow, this path is called "the path of God." This is [the heritage] which our Patriarch Abraham taught his descendants, as [Genesis 18:19] states: "for I have known Him so that he will command his descendants...to keep the path of God." One who follows this path brings benefit and blessing to himself, as [the above verse continues]: "so that God will bring about for Abraham all that He promised."