

A man or woman who shall do something wondrous by taking a Nazarite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem. (6:2)

Why would someone choose to become a *nazir*? It may be the result of a harmful experience associated with drinking wine. Alternatively, it may be the product of a conviction that one should abstain from mundane pleasures. The individual feels that he is too involved with himself. Consequently, he goes to the extreme, taking a vow to abstain from his usual pleasures. The *nazir* must make sure that he does not defile his *nezirus* by coming in contact with a dead body. If this does happen, the *nazir* becomes *tamei*, ritually unclean. He must go through a purification process after which he offers three *korbonos* as penance. His prior days of *nezirus* became invalid, and he must begin a new term of *nezirus*.

Ostensibly having to go through a second ritual of *nezirus* can be very trying. It was for this reason that Shimon *Ha'tzaddik*, who was *Kohen Gadol*, refused to eat from the sacrifices offered by a *nazir* who had inadvertently become unclean. He felt that most *nezirim* who had to repeat their *nezirus* period regretted that they had ever made their vow. Thus, their *nezirus* was not fully *I'shem Shomayim*. Once, however, he made an exception and did partake from such an offering. The story relates that once a young *nazir* who was very handsome, with beautiful long locks of hair, came before him. Seeing this young man, Shimon *Ha'tzaddik* said to him, "Do you know that at the end of your *nezirus* term you will have to cut off your beautiful curls? What provoked you to become a *nazir*?" The young man replied, "I was not conscious of my appearance, until one day I looked into the water and noticed my reflection. While I gazed at my good looks, I felt my *yetzer hora* grabbing hold of me, persuading me to sin. Realizing the danger, I said to myself, "Should I permit myself to become arrogant over my good looks, which are only temporary? Should I throw away my eternity to satisfy the passions of the fleeting moment? Immediately, I made a vow to become a *nazir* and shave my hair *I'shem Shomayim*." Shimon *Ha'tzaddik* was so impressed with the young man's conviction and sincerity that he kissed him on his forehead and said, "May there be more *nezirim* like you!"

Looking back at this story, we may wonder what really impressed Shimon *Ha'tzaddik*. By responding the way he did to the blandishments of his *yetzer hora*, was not the young man doing what any *baal teshuvah* should do? After all, his evil inclination was attempting to convince him to sin, should he have sat back and done nothing? What earth-shattering action earned him such prominence?

Horav Zalmen Bloch, zl suggests that the distinction lies in the immediacy of his response to the *yetzer hora's* challenge. The *nazir* realized that the *yetzer hora's* first move against him was an incursion that could lead to his complete destruction - if he did not act immediately. It is not sufficient to simply be aware of one's weakness, it is imperative that one actually take action. This young man demonstrated this remarkable strength of character. The slightest sensitivity that

something was wrong caused an immediate reaction. Such a person is not immersed in himself. He neither looks for excuses to justify his behavior nor seeks a way to evade responding to the *yetzer hora*'s challenge. He knows what might happen, and he immediately acts accordingly.