

NEDARIM

THE COMMENDABLE NAZIR

(9b) We learned in a *Baraita*: R. Shimon Hatzaddik said: All my life I never have eaten from a guilt-offering that was brought by a *nazir*¹ who had defiled himself, except in one instance. Once a *nazir* came from the south, and I saw that he had beautiful eyes, a handsome appearance, and his thick locks of hair were arranged in jet-black ringlets. I said to him, "My son, what made you commit yourself to destroy your beautiful hair?" (Because at the end of the term of his vow, a *nazir* has to shave off his hair.)² The *nazir* replied, "Back home I was a shepherd for my father. Once when I went to draw water from a well I gazed at my reflection in the water. At that moment my evil impulse seized me and tried to drive me from the world [i.e., destroy my place in the World to Come through the sin of pride]. But I said to my lust, 'Evil creature! Why do you boastfully intrude into a world that is not yours, [you are proud of something] that is destined to become dust, worms, and maggots? I swear that I will [become a *nazir* so that I will be forced to] shave off [this beautiful hair] for the sake of heaven.'"

{Said R. Shimon Hatzaddik:} I immediately got up and kissed his head, saying, "My son, may there be many *nezirim* [nazirites] like you in Israel! The Torah has you in mind when it says, 'When a man or a woman expresses a *nazirite* vow to God' (Numbers 6:2)." [You have the right motive for becoming a *nazir*, namely to subdue your *yetzer bara*.]³

R. Mani objected: [We were told above that it was Shimon Hatzaddik's custom not to eat from the guilt-offering of a *nazir* who had become unclean.] In what respect is a guilt-offering of an unclean *nazir* different, that he did not eat from it: is it because it comes as a result of a sin? Then he should not have eaten from any guilt-offerings,⁴ since they all are brought because of a sin? [Then why was he more reluctant to eat from a guilt-offering of an unclean *nazir* than from any other guilt-offering?] R. Yonah answered: This is the reason: When people regret their bad deeds they become *nazirites* [intending to be extremely self-disciplined for thirty days], but when [during the term of *nezirut*] they become unclean [through accidental contact with the dead] and have to start counting another thirty days of *nezirut*, they regret their commitment, and [since their intent is not sincere, it is as though they brought *chullin* [a profane sacrifice] to the Temple court. [But R. Shimon Hatzaddik was sure that this particular young man did not regret his vow of *nezirut*, and therefore he ate from his guilt-offering.]