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There Is Nothing That Equals Knowing :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Judaism is a religion that requires more than just simple faith from its adherents – though that too is a fundamental requirement. Its emphasis on knowledge, study and intellectual pursuit for all of its adherents, not just for clergy or teachers, is one of its more unique qualities. Thus being an unlettered or ignorant Jew is almost an oxymoron in Jewish terms. While the Torah does not demand or expect every Jew to be a great Talmudic scholar, it does expect that all Jews will pursue the study of some Torah on a regular basis.

The unlettered Jew – the classical *am ha'aretz* – was considered the bane of Jewish society. The Talmud had harsh judgments regarding such people. They were seen as the enemies of spiritual progress in the Jewish community and as people, who in their ignorance, would turn against the scholars of Israel and its Torah. In short, they were not to be entrusted with the leadership or future of the Jewish community.

The Talmud made allowance for those Jews who had no chance to study Torah in their life, a child who was kidnapped and raised amongst the non-Jewish world, but it made little excuse for those who were raised in a Jewish society and had opportunity to study Torah and chose not to do so. The willfully ignorant can never be pious was the mantra of the rabbis of the Mishna. And this attitude has prevailed all through Jewish history.

Not all Jews were scholars but illiteracy in basic Jewish studies, the prayer book, the Bible, customs, traditions and observances was rare indeed. The lowliest Jews were aware of their heritage and its uniqueness and though ignorant in other forms of general knowledge were keenly aware of the basic books and ideas of Judaism. The surrounding Jewish society, the language that Jews spoke such as Yiddish and Ladino, the Jewish calendar and its special days all contributed to the minimum knowledge necessary to be a Jew in the traditional understanding of the word.

This situation has changed radically over the past century. Most of American Jewry is not assimilated – it is simply completely ignorant of its faith. There is no longer a societal bond, language or calendar that connects them to their token faith. They are abysmally ignorant of everything about Judaism.

Every new “progressive” idea dominates their worldview and they impose these currently correct ideas on Judaism. Is there any wonder therefore that the rates of assimilation and intermarriage remain so depressingly high? Faith and tradition cannot take root in the soil of Jewish ignorance. This not only applies to Jewish observances but it applies to the attitude of Jews towards the Land of Israel and the Jewish state as well.

With ignorance of Jewish history and tradition, bereft of any knowledge of Judaism and its values, with naive acceptance of the propaganda of our enemies as being true or at the very least worthy of equal consideration, is there any wonder then that the lies of the Left are accepted and acted upon by these well-meaning but destructive Jews? As long as Jews are more familiar with Shakespeare than Isaiah we remain in danger of losing an entire generation of Western Jews to further assimilation and intermarriage.

The situation here in Israel is somewhat more complicated, better and more hopeful. However, here also the problem now is no longer the rebellious unbelievers of a century ago, the doctrinaire atheists and Marxists who controlled the yishuv and later the country for much of the past century, but rather a generation of ignorant Jews who speak Hebrew but know little about Judaism and its values and observances.

The Israeli secular school system has been drained of any traditional Jewish education over the past few decades. There are no longer contestants for the prizes in the world bible contest from secular Israeli schools. Yet there is a longing for some sort of Jewish life here and the correct formula for developing such a society has not yet been developed. The Jewish holidays here are a great unifying factor, even for those who choose not to observe them in any traditional form.

At least everyone in Israel is aware that there is a holiday called Shavuot, something that unfortunately cannot be said regarding Western and American Jewry. But there really is no substitute for knowing, when it comes to Jewish life and the survival of Judaism and Israel. It is the core problem that faces the Jewish world in our time and it will take great effort, immense resources and tenacious will to be able to grapple with it successfully.

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: NASSO :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The parsha begins with the description of the duties imposed on the families of Gershon and Mrori in the mishkan. At the conclusion of last week's parsha the duties of the family of Kehat were detailed. The parsha states that Gershon and Mrori are also to be valued and counted. The obvious inference is that if the Torah did not somehow here emphasize this equality of Gershon and Mrori to Kehat we may have thought differently.

The reason for this potential misunderstanding is clear. Kehat had the most glamorous of the tasks of the Levites. It dealt with the holy ark and the tablets of stone of Sinai, among the other holy artifacts of the Mishkan which were in its charge. It did not carry those vessels in wagons drawn by oxen but rather on their shoulders on poles slung over their shoulders. The ark in fact carried the children of Kehat and not vice versa.

It would then be easy to denigrate the more mundane work of Gershon and Mrori, the fact that they used wagons and oxen to transport the boards and hooks and curtains and other basic parts of the Mishkan. After all, the work that they did may be basic and necessary but perhaps it is less inspiring and holy than the work of Kehat.

The Torah comes to warn us not to think in those terms. Gershon and Mrori and their contribution to the Levite family and to the service of the Mishkan ranks equal to that of Kehat and they are also worthy of their special mention and count in the Torah.

There is a wise message contained in this idea of the Torah. Even those who seemingly serve in the most mundane fashion in the synagogues and schools of the Jewish people are to be treasured and appreciated. It is related by legend that one of the teachers of Rashi when becoming aged and no longer able to teach in the yeshiva nevertheless remained there and served as a helper to clean the building and the ark of the law contained therein.

For there are no mundane tasks when it comes to holiness and spiritual improvement. Household chores, workplace behavior, social interaction are all part of the matrix of Jewish Torah life. The small things, carrying the boards and placing them on wagons drawn by oxen are part of the same overall picture of Mishkan holiness as is the hoisting of the holy ark itself on the shoulders of Kehat. Not everyone is privileged to carry the holy ark. But everyone has the opportunity to be connected to the Mishkan and to do positive things on behalf of God and Israel.

Even the menial tasks in Judaism carry with them cosmic importance. It is up to the people who perform those tasks to invest in them the will and frame of mind that will elevate them and the work that they do the proper level of holiness and dedication. All Levites are equal in their potential to do good. And as Maimonides points out, all of us have the potential to be Levites in spirit as well.

Shabat shalom

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Nasso

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbors property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a kohen. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A kohen prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing G-ds Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A nazir is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The kohanim are commanded to bless the people. The Mishkan is completed and dedicated on the first day of Nisan in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the Mishkan, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

INSIGHTS

Read All About IT!

"A man or woman who will take the vow of a Nazir for the sake of G-d...from new or aged wine...shall he abstain." (6:2)

"Good evening, and here is the nine o'clock news. The perpetrators of last year's spectacular \$5,000,000 diamond heist were finally sentenced today to a total of 427 years in prison..."

David leaned forward and turned off the TV, sank back in his armchair and mused to himself, "\$5,000,000! Their only mistake was they weren't careful enough...if that had been me, I would have got away with it!"

In order to restore a husband's trust in his wife after she has behaved in a way that indicates that she may have been unfaithful to him, the Torah provides a means of verifying her innocence. This is called the mitzvah of Sotah. If she is innocent she is blessed with children who will be scholars, but if not, she dies a spectacular and miraculous death. Her stomach swells until she dies.

The Torah immediately follows this with the mitzvah of the Nazir. A Nazir is a person who takes upon himself additional stringencies such as refraining from wine and all grape derivatives. Rashi explains the connection of the two sections is to teach us that someone who sees the terrifying demise of the Sotah should understand that indulgence in wine leads to adultery, and distance himself from anything to do with wine.

But the question remains - shouldn't the spectacle of the grisly end of the Sotah, in itself, be more than adequate warning?

The implication here is that we are more attracted by the crime than deterred by the punishment.

A person can always rationalize and say to himself, "They weren't careful enough; I would have got away with it!" The spectacle of punishment enforces the idea of the feasibility of sin more than the danger of getting caught.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS NASSO

A man's holies shall be his. (5:10)

This pasuk is teaching us the importance of sharing our material abundance with the Kohen and Levi, suggesting that when we play games with charity, the only one who loses is the one who is playing. Once, a wealthy miser in Baghdad absolutely refused to give charity to the needy. He had a heart of stone concerning the plight of others. He contended that he had worked very hard to earn his wealth: "I am not willing to share the fruits of my blood, sweat and tears."

One day, as he was sitting in his beautiful garden, enjoying the scenery and taking pleasure in the wonderful fragrance, his butler served him a

delicious steak lunch. As the butler was walking down the walk, he slipped on the concrete and dropped the plate of meat into the dirt. Clearly the miser was not pleased with his butler's clumsiness. The butler picked up the dirt-covered piece of meat. As he was about to throw it away, he noticed a poor man standing on the other side of the fence, his mouth watering from just looking at the food. The miser saw the poor man as well, and he immediately told the waiter to give the dirty piece of meat to the poor man.

That night, the miser had a dream. He was in Gan Eden, and everybody was sitting at a long table waiting to be served. Shortly thereafter, the waiters came by and served the assemblage. They served everybody to the right and left of the miser - but skipped the miser. This upset the miser, who turned to the waiter to ask for his portion. The waiter returned with a meager piece of meat that was all dirty. Obviously, the miser was dissatisfied and complained to the waiter, "Why are you complaining?" the waiter asked. "This is the world of reward where one is treated commensurate to his actions in the other world. You receive reward in accordance with what and how you gave."

The author of Imrei Keil, who also lived in Baghdad, writes that is the meaning of V'ish es kadashav lo teyehu, that which a person gives to the needy is what will be his in the Eternal World. "A man's holies" - which which he shares with holiness, is exactly what he will receive in return. This might be an idea to consider the next time we are asked to give charity. What and how we give is what we will eventually receive.

A man or woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem... and he shall provide him atonement for having sinned regarding the person. (6:2, 11)

Judaism takes a dim view of extremism of any sort. The Torah instructs us V'chai bahem, "And he shall live by them" (Vayikra 18:5). The mitzvos have a purpose: to refine the Jew; to give him the opportunity to elevate his life; to live with a higher goal. We are certainly not required to die. Thus, for the average person, afflicting himself by depriving his body of its essential nutrients and by abstaining from living as a normal human being does not coincide with the Torah's idea of an ideal lifestyle. Indeed, one of the great Chassidic masters claimed that fasting and other forms of discretionary physical deprivations are the result of the counsel of the yetzer hora, evil inclination. This is its way of weakening our stamina, undermining our resolve and commitment to serve Hashem properly.

The Torah demands that the nazir who has completed his days of abstinence must bring a korban, sacrifice, to atone "for having sinned regarding the person." Chazal say that he sinned by depriving himself of the pleasure of drinking wine. They continue to say that we may derive from here that one who "sits" in fasting is called a sinner. This is substantiated by the Rambam who decries the individual who goes to the extreme by dispossessing himself of the gifts of this world. While one clearly may not indulge himself to the point of gluttony, deprivation is just as destructive.

Horav Meir Yechiel zl, m'Ostrovitz was known to fast quite regularly. He was asked how he allowed himself to act counter what Chazal have deemed normal Jewish behavior. Why was he behaving in such an extreme manner? He explained that Chazal emphasized that Hayoshev b'taanis, "One who sits in fasting" is a sinner. This refers to one who, even after having fasted, continues to "sit" on the same spiritual plane. He has not moved forward. He is just sitting there, maintaining his original status-quo. Such a person is a sinner, because he is depriving himself for no reason, gaining absolutely nothing from his abstinence from food. "I" said the Ostrovitzer, "sense that through my fasting, I am purifying and refining myself. Such abstinence from food is certainly laudable."

The Talmud in Sotah 2b questions the Torah's reason for juxtaposing the laws of nazir upon the laws of the sotah, the wayward wife. They derive from here that one who sees a sotah in her degradation should prohibit himself the consumption of wine by becoming a nazir. The sotah was a woman who allowed her sensual passions and desires for a life of frivolous and amorous behavior to control her mind, to permit her pursuit of pleasure to prevail over her responsibility to serve Hashem. Once the yetzer hora, evil inclination, takes hold of a person's senses, even adultery becomes acceptable behavior. We have only to look around us in contemporary

society to note how what used to be an anathema has become in vogue and suitable behavior.

The individual who sees the sotah in her degradation can easily fall prey to the fantasy of temptation. She was caught. I will be more careful. It is exciting, exhilarating. I can be free to live. This is the way the yetzer hora works on a person, slowly convincing him that not only is such behavior not sinful, but it is liberating. It will help him shake off the fetters of an archaic society that deprives him of life. In order to escape this deception, the Torah alludes that one should abstain from wine, which dulls his senses and deactivates his inhibitions. Emboldening him to take a nazirite vow sends home the powerful message that by espousing a spiritual life, he will circumvent the allure and put a stop to the blandishments that ensnared the sotah. Her priority was physical gratification, which she achieved, only to discover that it does not last. Once one has tasted the forbidden fruits, there is no way to satiate the desire for more. It becomes stronger and stronger until it overpowers the individual. A life in which the spirit reigns is a life of true satisfaction, something the person will come to realize during his period of nazirus.

Having said this, we offer an alternative approach to understanding the juxtaposition of nazir upon the tragedy of the sotah. It does not necessarily have to represent a response to a negative view; it can also be viewed from a positive perspective. The world of Chassidus revolves around and preaches the importance of simchah, joy, in one's life. Joy brings one closer to the Creator, as it elevates him spiritually. Once a group of chassidim were gathered in joyful expression to the Almighty. Wine flowed amid fervent and enthusiastic song and dance. A spectator passing by wondered how they could possibly celebrate so joyfully when Klal Yisrael was suffering so much in bitter exile. What right did this small group of chassidim have to engage in festivity when the Jewish people was suffering constant persecution?

Horav David Farkas, zl, one of the distinguished talmidei Baal Shem, disciples of the founder of Chassidus, the saintly Baal Shem Tov, answered by applying a positive twist to the pasuk of ki yafli lindor, "one who shall disassociate himself by taking a nazirite vow." "The Torah seems to be encouraging nazirus, indicating that it is correct and proper to abstain from wine. A few pesukim later, however, the Torah considers him a choteh, sinner. Rashi explains that the Nazir is wrong in depriving himself of the pleasure of wine. There seems to be a contradiction between the pesukim. Is he virtuous, or is he a sinner?

"The answer is, Haroeh sotah b'kilkulah, 'One who sees a sotah in her degradation,' should take a nazirite vow and abstain from drinking wine." Here, Rav David added a homiletic spin: "One who sees the degradation of others, an individual who views people with a jaundiced eye, who has a malignant outlook on the actions of those around him, should take a nazirite vow. Wine is dangerous for such a person. Imbibing will only raise his ire and infuriate him more."

The individual who views others in a positive light, seeing the best in a person, truly sins by abstaining himself from wine. On the contrary, does not David HaMelech say, "Wine gladdens the heart of a person" (Tehillim 104:15) It is up to us to serve Hashem joyfully, for the Shechinah only reposes amid joy.

I feel that those who are intolerant of others, who are always disapproving and resentful, are really expressing their own self-loathing. They are unhappy people - especially concerning themselves- so they take it out on others. It gives them sort of a reprieve from dwelling on their own miserable lives. One should first work on refining his own character, to work on being satisfied with himself and with his lot in life. Then, he will begin to see others more positively.

Some people view life as an adventure, with their role in the play called "life" their unique mission. Others, regrettably, look at life as a drag, a painful experience that must be endured. The Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, explain that one can change his negative attitude to positive by simply thinking along positive lines. The mere realization that perspective is his personal choice gives him a sense of control and helps him to improve his attitude. While at times a person does undergo a painful situation and has reason to kvetch, he should stop and think: it could have been worse.

While no one wants to hear that from someone else, if it is a personal consideration, it will have a greater and more positive impact.

"The best way to gain a proper perspective about life is to visit a cemetery," so say the Baalei Mussar. It sounds morbid, but think about it - it makes sense. For those who feel a cemetery is going a bit far, try the hospital. It will help you develop a "healthy" perspective on life. Horav Nochum, zl, m'Huradna, was an individual who suffered greatly in his life. Yet, he was wont to say, "If I had already died, and the Almighty told me I could return and come back to life again, imagine how happy I would be. Now that I am alive, I should feel the same sense of joy."

One of the greatest sources of joy is to be found in mitzvah performance. The Alter, zl, m'Slabodka says that Hashem gave us mitzvos for our ultimate happiness and pleasure. The goal of the Torah's laws is to provide a person with a way of living that will greatly enhance his life. So, why do we not always derive that designated pleasure? Why does mitzvah performance not necessarily make us happy? The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explains that because we have become so involved in worldly matters, the mundane has overshadowed the spiritual. We have lost our sensitivity to the incredible amount of joy that we can potentially experience upon performing a mitzvah. Simply stated, it just does not mean the same to us as it once did to our forebears. This lack of sensitivity is the root of all transgression. When we lack joy and enthusiasm in what we are doing, this deficit pulls us down into the muck of sin.

As much as happiness is critical to spiritual development, sadness, which is its counterpart, is equally serious. Essentially, the two go together. One who takes a dim view of life does not allow himself to be happy. Sadness is a disease which goes unseen by many - especially the victim. It is probably more of a silent killer than some of the physical ailments that physicians have popularized. We notice wealthy people who seem to be happy. The Ahavas Meisharim feels that many wealthy people are so blinded by their wealth that they do not realize how unhappy they really are. This is a powerful thought for all of us to think about.

All too often, we spend our precious time feeling sorry for ourselves, rather than doing anything about it. It is much more destructive than simply wasting time and energy. It might actually be an act of selfishness. A lumber dealer, who was one of the followers of Horav Mordechai zl, m'Lehivitz, shipped a load of lumber to Danzig, and the load was lost, causing him a considerable financial loss. When he expressed his grief to Rav Mordechai, the Rebbe told him, "Chazal teach us that Hashem participates in our sorrow. Is it considerate of you to bring sorrow to the Almighty for the loss of some lumber?" This might be something to consider the next time we overreact to something which we feel is discouraging. Is it something that we feel comfortable imposing on the Almighty?

All the days of his abstinence for the sake of Hashem he shall not come near a dead person. (6:6)

The Baal HaTurim gives an intriguing reason for the prohibition against a nazir coming in contact with the dead. There is a fear that if the Shechinah reposes on him as a result of his nezirus, people might conjecture that this is because he doreish el ha'meisim, consults with the dead, which is prohibited by the Torah. In other words, there is a possibility that people will attribute his kedushah, holiness, to negative sources. The question that arises is how does abstaining from wine for a period of thirty days and letting one's hair grow catalyze kedushah? We fear what people are going to think. Obviously, something about this nazir makes him stand out. How did he become the recipient of such kedushah literally overnight?

Horav Sholom Levin, zl, derives from here that it is not how long or great one's actions are that define their distinctions. It all depends upon one's machashavah, purity of one's intentions. When one acts solely l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven, he can achieve incredible heights. He does not have to undertake to save the world or to create some phenomenal transformation. It takes even the smallest steps in a positive direction, but with a pure heart. It is the little things that one does that make a difference. Thirty days of pure devotion, sincere emotion from the depths of one's heart, catalyze kedushah - as long as the focus is Shomayim, Heaven.

Moshe Rabbeinu was walking in the wilderness when he noticed a burning bush. Chazal tell us that all Moshe did was to take three steps towards the

bush; in an alternative exposition, they say that all he did was to turn his head slightly in the direction of the bush. Yet, Hashem told him, "You took pains to turn aside to glimpse. I swear to you that I shall reveal Myself to you." What great deed did Moshe perform? What did he do that merited such incredible reward?

Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, explains that it was Moshe's slight endeavor, his initial reaction, his hishtadlus, which was performed with sensitivity and caring, that made the difference. He did not have to stop. He could easily have kept on walking and ignored the sight. He did not, however, because he cared. That small initiative defined his greatness. It is not the great things that we do which define us. It is the little things, the caring for those who will not necessarily earn us a plaque, the little kindnesses, the small acts of thoughtfulness: these define a person.

May Hashem bless you and guard you. (6:24)

The commentators offer a number of explanations in interpretation of this pasuk. In his Haamek Davar, The Netziv, zl, observes that v'yishmirecha, "and (He will) guard you," is inextricably tied to yivarechicha, "(may Hashem) bless you." Every blessing can, without the proper direction, be transformed into a curse. Therefore, when we pray for rain, we conclude, livrachah v'lo liklallah, "for a blessing and not for a curse." We are acutely aware that every blessing, if it is not guarded, can become the source of curse. It can become its beneficiary's worst nightmare.

This idea applies to every individual, regardless of his vocation. The ben Torah who is truly blessed must see to it that this blessing does not go to his head, and that he is extremely careful not to cause a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. This is a distinct possibility, especially in light of the fact that his actions are meticulously scrutinized by a world society that is not necessarily sympathetic to his way of life. The one who is blessed with material abundance must also take extreme care not to allow the power generated by his wealth to go to his head. The classic case in the Torah is Korach, whose wealth played a critical role in his downfall. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that a young boy once approached him during the Tashlich prayer on Rosh Hashanah and pointed to the Machzor which contained the prayer written by the Chida, l'hamtik dinim takifin, "May this sweeten the harsh judgment." What is the meaning of "sweetening the harsh judgment"? If it is sweet, it is not harsh; and if it is harsh, it is not sweet. Rav Zilberstein explained that the Chida, who was a holy mystic, clearly had some profound kavanos, intentions, in mind when he authored this prayer. Nonetheless, he gave a practical explanation based upon the following story. The Avnei Nezer, who was the rav of Sochatchev, was succeeded by his son, the Shem MiShmuel. Both were great tzaddikim, righteous persons, whose knowledge of the length and breadth of the Torah was phenomenal. The Avnei Nezer had a chasid who was very devout and dedicated to his Rebbe. Sadly, he and his wife had not been blessed with children. Every time he went to the Rebbe, he entreated him for a blessing to have children. For reasons unbeknownst to the chasid, the Rebbe demurred from granting a blessing. Regardless of how often the chasid asked for a blessing, the answer was always no.

The chasid looked for a moment in which the Avnei Nezer would be in a moment of spiritual elevation, when his sense of joy would be intense. He felt that at such a time he might be able to convince the Rebbe to grant him a blessing. It was Simchas Torah, and the Rebbe had danced fervently, his face was aglow with a sense of profound dveikus, clinging to Hashem. The joy in the room was palpable. This was clearly a propitious time to petition the Rebbe for a blessing. The chasid approached the Rebbe and said, "Rebbe, I am not leaving this place until the Rebbe grants my wish. I need a blessing to have children."

The Rebbe looked deep into the chasid's eyes and said, "Do you want me to bless you with a son who will become a priest?" When the chasid heard this, his face became ashen. The Rebbe had perceived with Ruach HaKodesh, Divine Inspiration, that the child he was destined to have would apostatize himself and eventually become a priest. This is why he had refused to bless him. He no longer asked the Avnei Nezer for a blessing to have children.

A while later, after the Avnei Nezer's passing from this world, his son became Rebbe. The Shem MiShmuel was acutely aware of the chasid's overwhelming pain. He knew how much it meant to him to be blessed with

a child. That year on Simchas Torah, after the Rebbe had finished dancing and effusing great joy, he motioned to the chasid to approach. "I would like to bless you that this year will be the year that you will become a father!" the Rebbe enthusiastically declared.

The chasid stood there speechless. He not only refrained from responding with a resounding Amen, but to avoid affirming the blessing, he actually turned ashen and appeared ready to faint. The Shem MiShmuel noticed this reaction-- or lack thereof-- and asked why he did not answer Amen to the blessing. Furthermore, why did he look like he was about to pass out?

The chasid was not about to conceal from the Shem MiShmuel the nevuah his father had divulged to him. He explained that once the Avnei Nezer had told him that his son to be born would end up as a priest, the subject of children was closed. This was not why he had wanted a child.

The Shem MiShmuel listened, thought for a moment, nodded his head, and said, "Nonetheless, I want you to be blessed." The chasid responded, "Amen." Five children were born to the chasid and his wife. Four tragically perished in the infernos of the Holocaust. One survived, to establish a beautiful family of talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, G-d-fearing children and grandchildren, who continue to serve as a nachas to Klal Yisrael. How did he survive? Apparently, he was fluent in a number of languages, and he disguised himself as an Italian priest. Using his disguise, he was able to elude detection and survived the Holocaust.

Clearly, Heaven had issued a harsh judgment against the chasid, but the Shem MiShmuel was able to "sweeten it." The son appeared to be a priest - but he was not.

Va'ani Tefillah

Ashrei she'Keil Yaakov b'ezro - happy is one whose help is Yaakov's G-d.

The ability to recognize from whence comes one's salvation is a powerful attribute. Yes, we all pay lip service to the fact that Hashem is the Source of our salvation, but how many truly mean what they say? How many feel what they so casually assert? Throughout all of his adversity, Yaakov Avinu never once deviated from his belief in Hashem. Never did his trust wane. How fortunate is he who can affirm such belief as our Patriarch did.

The word sivo, can also be related to the Aramaic savar, which denotes thought. This, explains Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, indicates a higher level of cognition: one whose hope is on Hashem. His constant thought is on Hashem as his sole salvation. This individual does not simply place his trust in Hashem; rather, he has established a personal relationship with the Almighty. Whereas others are included in the promises made to Klal Yisrael, he is constantly aware of Hashem's supervision and guidance. Hashem is always with him. It is not a question of trust. It is a relationship, a bond, the connection is personal.

Sponsored in loving memory of our dear father and zaidy on his yahrtzeit Rabbi Shlomo Silberberg HaRav Shlomo ben Nosson z"l nifter 14 Sivan 5759 t.n.tz.v.h. Zev Aryeh & Miriam Solomon & Family

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Nasso

The Common Denominator Between Long Hair and A Shaven Head

This week's parsha contains the laws of Nazirus. A Nazir is a person who accepts upon himself an added level of holiness. As a result of this added kedusha, the Nazir is prohibited from consuming wine or any wine products, he is forbidden from having anything to do with dead bodies, and he also must grow his hair long.

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 374) has a far ranging discussion on the significance of letting the hair grow long. The Sefer HaChinuch writes that a human being is comprised of body and intellect, the physical and the spiritual. In truth, the soul and the spiritual side of a human being longs for pure spirituality. It really does not want to be tied down and bothered by all the physical aspects of what it means to be a human being. But, given the reality of life, it is necessary to provide for the needs of the body. Just as a valuable item placed in a house, can only be properly guarded and protected if the house is maintained (If the house is not kept up, it will eventually collapse and the treasure will be lost.) the same is true of the neshama [soul]. The neshama is inside a human body, which must be tended to. The body must be appropriately fed and nurtured.

Jews are not ascetics. We do not deny the needs of our bodies, but rather take care of our physical side as well. The "house" cannot exist without paying attention to it. The Nazir, however, wants to make a statement and tone down his physical side. He does this by neglecting – to some extent – the needs of his body. He chooses a very appropriate manner to tone down his physical side without harming that physical body in an appreciable way. He does this by abstaining from wine, because wine is not an absolute physical necessity. Along the same lines, he lets his hair grow. The Chinuch writes that one's hair can become a tremendous attraction. It is something a person might "get into". By letting his hair grow long, a person separates himself from physicality.

The Chinuch quotes the Gemara [Nedarim 9b] regarding the single Nazir that Shimon HaTzadik felt was worthy enough to eat from his sacrifice. Shimon HaTzadik inquired of a young nazir why he decided to take upon himself nazirus. The shepherd explained how he had once seen his reflection in the water and became infatuated with his appearance. He became a Nazir – first growing his hair long and wild and then shaving it off entirely – to minimize his preoccupation with his physical appearance. The Chinuch explains that both the process of growing the hair long and then the process of shaving his head entirely accomplish the same purpose. The common denominator between these two processes is that they diminish man's appearance – they make him look like less of a "mensch". When we see someone whose hair is all wild, our reaction is "he's not a mensch". We have the same reaction when we see someone who shaves his head totally bald.

Rav Matisyahu Solom on once observed that this idea of the Sefer HaChinuch would seem to fly in the face of a commonly observed phenomenon in the modern world. If long hair or no hair is somehow a contradiction to the natural image of a human being, why is it that today we see so many people going around with either excessively long hair or a purposely shaved head? Do these people not agree with the premise of the Chinuch that such appearance "spoils the countenance of man"?

Rav Matisyahu answers that, in fact, the tables are turned today. Today's yetzer hara [evil inclination] is to say: I don't need to be a mensch [normal human being]. I don't want to act like a mensch. Today's lust is to say "I can do whatever I want!" Human dignity comes with certain responsibilities. Those responsibilities are rejected by many today and they purposely throw away human dignity, knowing full well that this dignity comes as a "package deal" with the responsibilities of being a decent human being. Today, nobody wants to be like a mensch because if you're not a mensch, you can do whatever you want.

Charity Is The Best Investment

Prior to the chapter of the Sotah [unfaithful wife] [Bamidbar 5:10], the Torah writes about giving the priestly gifts to the Kohen: "A man's holies shall be his, and what a man gives to the Kohen shall be his." The concluding words "lo yiheyeh" [to him they shall be] are somewhat ambiguous. The Kohen is the antecedent (reference) of the pronoun "lo yiheyeh" [To him they shall be]. However if the intent of the pasuk [verse] is to say they will belong to the Kohen, the pasuk is constructed in both a round-about and redundant fashion.

The reading of the pasuk also tolerates the interpretation that the words "lo yiheyeh" refer not to the Kohen, but to the person who gives the gifts to the Kohen. That, however raises a logical problem, because if one gives something to the Kohen, it is not his anymore.

Rashi, in fact recognizes the problematic sentence structure and comments that there are many medrashic interpretations to the pasuk.

Rav Bezalel Zolty cites a true story that precisely explains this pasuk. Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, Rosh Yeshiva of Slabodka, came to the United States in 1924 to collect money. While he was here, he received a telegram from the "Alter" [Elder] of Slabodka that the Lithuanian government was going to draft all the Yeshivas students into the Lithuanian army. This would have been a death sentence for all of those students, if not in a physical sense, then certainly in a spiritual sense.

The "Alter" told Rav Moshe Mordechai that he was sending 150 students from Slabodka to Palestine to start a Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. For this massive undertaking, he needed 25,000 dollars – a huge sum in those days. Rav Epstein went to a wealthy Jew from a Manhattan banking family,

named Schiff. Rav Epstein told Mr. Schiff about the situation and expected a nice donation. Mr. Schiff wrote a check for the entire sum.

In the depression (1929), Mr. Schiff lost his entire fortune. In the 1930s, Rav Moshe Mordechai was already not well and could not make the trip to America. He sent his son-in-law, Rav Chatzkel Sarna to come to New York to collect money for the Slabodka Yeshiva. Rav Sarna came to America in the early 1930s, the height of the depression. Mr. Schiff lost everything he had in the stock market and everything he had in the real estate market. Indeed, he was then living in the basement of a building he once owned.

However, Mr. Schiff came to speak at a parlor meeting held in New York on behalf of the Slabodka yeshiva. At the parlor meeting, Mr. Schiff said that of all the investments that he ever owned – the real estate, the stocks, everything – the only investment that he still had was the \$25,000 he gave 10 years earlier to the Slabodka yeshiva. Everything else he lost. He can only look at the Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael that had young Torah students learning and say "That is my investment; that still delivers great dividends to me and my family." He told the assembled parlor meeting that the only money that one has that is guaranteed is the money that one gives to charity.

In light of this story, we may gain new insight into the previously quoted pasuk from our parsha. "And a man who gives his offerings to the Kohen, they will be to him". Indeed although he gave them away to the Kohen, they remain to him, as a merit and as an eternal investment.

No one can ever take that investment away from him. The dot coms can get delisted and the brokerage houses can fail. One's stock portfolio can drop in value to virtually nothing. But there is one thing that a person keeps forever. The money a man gives to charity – lo yiheyeh – will remain his forever.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger The TorahWeb Foundation Saving a Marriage

"We have given each other grief for years, we have done the self help books, and we have done the counseling, do you really think we can ever make this work?" The rabbi is no prophet but he may guide the couple to draw inspiration from none other than this week's reading of the parsha of sotah, the laws of a wife who is accused of destroying the very family in which she may be very invested.

That is because the Torah does end the parsha on a happy note. The couple that survives the sotah ordeal physically in tact, unharmed by the divinely charged water and thus acquitted from the accusations brought forth, is promised great growth and harmony. Thus it emerges that a family whose mother stubbornly challenged her husband's request for greater modesty, violated the laws of yichud and was accused publicly and unrelentingly of infidelity, can still somehow, after all is proven false, pull it all back together. If for that optimistic message alone to the many who step back from the abyss, we were to study this parsha annually, dayeinu!

However, I think Hashem also presents some tools, in this parsha, for the couple who has to rebuild a relationship that certainly has been shaken to its very core. Chazal stress the supreme value of "shalom bayis" by pointing out Hashem's directive to erase His written name, the heart of all sanctity in writing, in order to bring peace and harmony to a home. Clearly Chazal understood that Hashem's name was not being destroyed to end a couple but rather to help in salvaging a very troubled marriage. Perhaps the couple who watches the kohein erase the very record to which we would accord uncompromising respect and which is His representation in a physical world, learns that the success of their second chance will depend on their ability to sacrifice even precious self defining dreams, when necessary.

That is why I often cringe when I hear a chupa or sheva berachos drosho that encourages spouses to be vigilant about their individuality throughout their future together. I don't think that that is the message of the optimism

of the parsha. Rather dream and define oneself as a team ready to sacrifice threatening aspects of one's individuality, all be it, very attuned to one's strengths and contributions.

A similar idea is quoted by Rashi as an introduction to the parsha of sotah. Concerned about the juxtaposition between parshas sotah and the preceding parsha of appropriate gifting to kohanim, Rashi explains that one may well lead to the other. Here the message is, if you hold back the *trumah* from kohanim, you may meet him in the *mikdash* with your noncompliant spouse. It must be upsetting to suspect one's wife of infidelity and be told that this is happening to you because you held back on your charitable giving! Yet here too, the Torah is suggesting that the separate routes that these spouses may have taken, can still converge once again, if they learn to give and give more and even enjoy it all the while.

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Drasha Parshas Naso

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Respectful Repeats

One of the most striking components of Parshas Naso is the listing of all the princes, the *nessi'im*, of the Children of Israel, and the gift offerings that they brought in conjunction with the dedication of the *Mishkan*.

Despite the fact that each and every *nasi* brought the same gift as his predecessor, the Torah details each offering with exactitude: it does not skimp on detail or abbreviate its significance.

Over and over again, the Torah meticulously states the name of the *nasi*, the tribe he headed, and the gift that he brought.

"He brought his offering - one silver bowl, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; and one silver basin of seventy shekels in the sacred shekel; both of them filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a meal-offering, one gold ladle of ten [shekels] filled with incense. One young bull, one ram, one sheep in its first year for an elevation offering. One he-goat for a sin-offering. And for a feast peace-offering - two cattle, five rams, five he-goats, five sheep in their first year ... this is the offering of ..."

These verses are repeated in tandem for each and every prince -- their identical offerings exacted as if they were the only ones.

The Torah, which can consolidate laws that fill expansive Talmudic tomes into merely a few brief words, chose to elaborate expansively in order to give each *nasi* his place in the eternal spotlight of the Torah's wisdom. Why?

Rabbi Paysach Krohn, in the first book of his classic *Maggid Series*, relates the story of Rav Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor, the Kovno Rav. Under Russian law, all young men were obliged to enlist in the army. Besides the obvious ubiquitous threat of violent death, maintaining any semblance of religious observance in the army was virtually impossible. The only way out was an exemption from army service.

Yaakov, a student who was much beloved by his rebbi, Rav Yitzchak Elchonon, applied for an exemption. Moscow did not immediately respond to the request, and each day Yaakov's friends, together with their beloved Rebbe, Rav Yitzchak Elchonon, waited to hear any news of whether Yaakov's exemption was accepted.

One afternoon, Rav Yitzchak Elchonon was engrossed in a Rabbinic litigation. He sat together with Rav Elya Boruch Kamai, the Rav of Mir, and a third distinguished Rav. They were litigating a complex problem involving two wealthy businessmen. Both side was willing to compromise, and for hours the three Rabbis attempted to find an amicable yet halachically acceptable resolution.

Suddenly, the door opened and a young man stuck his head into the room. As soon as he saw Rav Yitzchak Elchonon, he excitedly addressed him. "Rebbi!" he exclaimed. "We just got the news, Yaakov was granted an exemption!" Rav Yitzchak Elchonon breathed a sigh of relief and said with a radiant smile, as he showered him with blessings. "May G-d bless you for bringing this wonderful news. May you merit long years and good health. Thank you ever so much!"

The boy left smiling, glad that he had made his rebbi so happy. Immediately the Rabbis resumed deliberations in an attempt to resolve the *din Torah*.

A few minutes later, another student opened the door. Not knowing that his rebbi already knew the news, he apologized for interrupting saying he had something very important to share. Then he announced with joy, "Rebbi, we've gotten word that Yaakov is exempt!"

Rav Yitzchak Elchonon replied with just as much enthusiasm as he had the first time. "How wonderful!" He showered him with blessings as well. "May G-d bless you for bringing this wonderful news. May you merit long years and good health. Thank you ever so much!"

The boy closed the door and left, beaming with joy that he had made his rebbi so happy.

Five minutes later, yet a third boy entered the room. "Rebbi, did you hear? Yaakov is exempt!" Once again Rav Yitzchak Elchonon smiled broadly and blessed the boy for the wonderful news. He thanked him and blessed him in the exact manner as with the previous boys.

Six times, different boys came in with the same news, each one anticipating the happiness their rebbi would feel at the news, each one not aware that others had preceded him. Rav Yitzchak Elchonon smiled at each boy, expressed his gratitude and made him feel as important as the first one.

The *Ponovez Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Eliezer Schach, of blessed memory, once explained in a talk to his students that the attention to the honor of a fellow Jew is one of the most important lessons we can learn. Therefore the Torah repeated and repeated each and every *Nasi* with the same enthusiasm to teach us the importance of respect for the individual.

And now that the story of the repetitive princes was incorporated into the Torah, the lesson of individual attention, too, becomes not just a lesson in morality, but a portion of the Torah, whose study merits the same value as the most intricate laws that are contained in the most difficult portions. Because a lesson about honoring a fellow Jew is surely worth repeating.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

YatedUSA

Halachah Talk

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Avoiding Yichud in Everyday Situations

Yichud, the prohibition against a man being alone in a secluded place with a woman, is Biblically forbidden.¹ It is for this reason that Yosef ha-Tzaddik, who as a son of Yaakov Avinu kept the *mitzvos* of the Torah, refused to be alone with his master's wife in their home.² Indeed, on that fateful day when he unexpectedly found himself alone with her in the house, he was almost tempted to sin. What follows are some guidelines concerning *yichud* in everyday situations.

Question: Are relatives included in the prohibition of *yichud* ?

Discussion: *Yichud* is permitted with linear descendants, such as parents with their children³ or grandchildren.⁴ *Yichud* is also permitted between a brother and a sister⁵ and a nephew with his father's or mother's sister,⁶ but only on a temporary basis.⁷ They may not live together in the same house for a period of time which exceeds the normal stay of a house guest.⁸ *Yichud* with all other relatives, such as uncles, aunts [through marriage], cousins, brothers-in-law, parents-in-law, etc., is strictly prohibited.⁹

Question: At what age does the prohibition of *yichud* begin?

Discussion: A girl over *bas mitzvah* is forbidden to be alone with a boy over the age of nine. A boy over *bar mitzvah* is forbidden to be alone with a girl over the age of three.¹⁰ If both the boy and the girl are under the age of *bar/bas mitzvah*, *yichud* between them is permitted, even though the boy is over nine and the girl is older than three.¹¹

Under extenuating circumstances, there is some room for leniency for a boy over *bar mitzvah* to be alone with a girl under six or seven. This leniency is based on the following two arguments:

1. The view of the *Chazon Ish*,¹² when discussing the halachos of reciting *Kerias Shema* in the presence of an *ervah*, is that a little girl over the age of three is not considered an *ervah* because people do not view her as such

until she matures. While there is no exact age that determines ervah since the rate of maturation varies from girl to girl, it is generally assumed that a girl up to the age of five or six is not considered an ervah.¹³ In the opinion of some poskim, the Chazon Ish's leniency applies to hilchos yichud as well; yichud, therefore, is permitted with a girl until the age of five or six.¹⁴ Other poskim reject this view and hold that the Chazon Ish's leniency does not apply to hilchos yichud at all.¹⁵

2. Rav M. Feinstein¹⁶ deals with this issue from a different angle. In his opinion, yichud may be permitted with a girl over three since a girl that age will surely report any illicit behavior to her parents or teachers. The fear of being found out is enough of a deterrent to permit yichud with a girl that young. In his final evaluation, however, Rav Feinstein hesitates to expressly permit yichud with a girl over three, although he does not object to those who are lenient. In an oral ruling,¹⁷ Rav Feinstein allows yichud — when necessary — with a girl till age seven.

Question: Are there any permissible ways in which a girl over twelve may baby-sit for a boy over nine?

Discussion: There are several permissible ways. The halachic definition of yichud is: seclusion with little or no chance of intrusion from the outside. The halachah states, therefore, that if there is a pesach pasuach (open door) to a reshus ha-rabim (public domain), then yichud does not apply, since there is a constant possibility of public access. Thus, for yichud to be permitted, both of the above factors — pesach pasuach and reshus ha-rabim — must be present.

What constitutes pesach pasuach is a subject of debate among the poskim. Similarly, there is no exact, undisputed definition of reshus ha-rabim. In the following situations, however, there is general agreement among the poskim that yichud is permitted:¹⁸

- If the front door is left completely or partially open.¹⁹ During nighttime sleeping hours, the house must also be well lit.²⁰
- If the front door is closed, but unlocked, and people sometimes walk into the house without knocking.²² During nighttime sleeping hours one should not rely on this solution.²³
- If the door is locked, but the parents or other members of the household are in possession of a key and could come into the house at any time.²⁴
- If the door is locked, but there is an unimpeded view from the street or from a facing window directly into the room where the yichud is taking place.²⁵ The home must be well lit. This solution should not be relied upon after nighttime sleeping hours.²⁶

- If another child, male²⁷ or female,²⁸ is in the house. There are various opinions concerning the required age of the other child — ranging from a minimum age of five to a maximum of thirteen for a male and twelve for a female.²⁹ This leniency is only applicable during normal waking hours.³⁰ To extend this leniency to nighttime sleeping hours, there have to be two children present besides the one who is being cared for.³¹ Often, none of the above solutions are practical. A baby-sitter may not want to leave the door open or unlocked. Sometimes the parents may be out of town or unavailable to check on their children. Thus, the preferred method when hiring a baby-sitter is to give a set of keys to a married couple that lives nearby,³² with instructions that the husband and wife should come into the house several times throughout the day and night. The baby-sitter must be told of these instructions. The neighbor must actually go into the house several times for this leniency to be valid.³³

Footnotes

1 This is the view of the vast majority of the Rishonim. In certain situations, such as when one man is alone with two women, yichud is Biblically permitted but prohibited by the Rabbis.

2 See Ibn Ezra, Rashbam and Seforno on Bereishis 39:10.

3 E.H. 22:1. See Igros Moshe, E.H. 2:15 and 4:65-8, who rules that it is permitted for a man to be alone with a woman other than his wife in the presence of his daughter, mother or sister.

4 Pischei Teshuvah, E.H. 22:2 quoting the Bach. Yichud with great-grandchildren, however is not permitted; Rav N. Karleitz (Chut Shani, Ribbis, pg. 172).

5 Beis Shmuel and Chelkas Mechokek, E.H. 22:1.

6 Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:63; 64-1, since a nephew and his aunts have the same relationship as a brother to a sister, based on Shulchan Aruch, E.H. 21:7.

7 Beis Shmuel and Chelkas Mechokek, E.H. 22:1.

8 Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:64, 3:65-11, who adds that a sister who is visiting from a distant city may stay longer than a sister visiting from a nearby area, just as a guest from afar stays longer than a guest from nearby. See also Emes l'Yaakov, E.H. 22:1, note 7.

9 E.H. 22:1; Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:63; 64-1.

10 E.H. 22:11.

11 Bach and Yam Shel Shlomo in the name of the Semag, quoted in Devar Halachah 2:8 and Divrei Sofrim 22:119. [Some contemporary poskim advise avoiding yichud between older minors; see Shevet ha-Levi 5:204 and Halichos Chaim, vol. 2, pg. 155, quoting Rav. C. Kanievsky.]

12 O.C. 16:8. See also Maharam Brisk 2:70 who concurs with this ruling. Rav M. Feinstein is also quoted (Children in Halachah, pg. 30) as concurring with this ruling.

13 Halichos Bas Yisrael 4:3; Ohr l'Tziyon 6:12. Rav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 75:1, note 104) ruled that until age five is clearly permitted, while from age five and up it depends on the individual girl.

14 Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.Y. Neuwirth (quoted in Nishmas Avraham, vol. 5, pg. 135). Hugging and kissing, however, is prohibited from age three and on; *ibid*.

15 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Nishmas Avraham, vol. 5, pg. 135). In addition, Rav S.Z. Auerbach himself is quoted elsewhere (Halichos Shlomo 1:20, Orchos Halachah, note 31) as strongly opposing this leniency.

16 Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-12.

17 Quoted in Children in Halachah, pg. 40.

18 There is a disagreement among the poskim if the leniency of pesach pasuach may be relied upon when the baby-sitter and the child share a close, personal relationship which could be described as *libo gas bah*. One should be stringent; Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:60; 4:65-9.

19 E.H. 22:9.

20 The poskim rule that during the late hours of the night, when people are not on the streets, the leniency of an open door does not apply; see Be'er Heitev and Pischei Teshuvah, E.H. 22:9, and Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-5. When the house is well lit, however, there are poskim who are lenient; see Devar Halachah 3:15.

21 Ruling of Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav C.P. Scheinberg (Kuntres Yichud, pg. 25) as a compromise between those who require the door to be completely open and those who allow yichud as long as the door is not locked.

See Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-4, who is lenient even when the door is locked, as long as there is a possibility that someone would come knocking on the door and would need to be let in. Most other poskim do not agree with this leniency.

22 Since even a completely open door should not be relied upon late at night. Even having the house well lit would possibly not suffice in this case; see Devar Halachah 3:15.

23 Devar Halachah 3:3 quoting the Chazon Ish and Dovev Meisharim.

24 Noda B'yehudah, E.H. 1:77; Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-2; Devar Halachah 3:10.

25 See note 22.

26 Beis Shmuel E.H. 22:9; Chochmas Adam 126:5-9.

27 E.H. 22:10.

28 See Devar Halachah 4:2-3 for all of the various views. A sister of any age over five serves as a shomer (guard).

29 Rama, E.H. 22:5; Chasam Sofer, E.H. 2:96. Even if the child is presently up, once it is past his normal bedtime we are concerned that he may fall asleep at any time and will no longer serve as a shomer. The same halachah applies during the day if the shomer is actually sleeping.

30 Chazon Ish, Kiddushin 45; Devar Halachah 4:9.

31 A married couple is preferable since they can come together to check on the house, thus avoiding a possible yichud problem between the baby-sitter and the neighbor. Even in a situation where a yichud problem does not exist, two neighbors should be asked to check the house, since we are fearful that one may forget or fall asleep.

32 Devar Halachah, pg. 188-189. See further clarification in Avnei Yashfei 2:185.

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