

Dvar Torah Outline — Parashat Naso: Sotah & Nazir, Hair as “Kalkul,” and Turning Failure into Tikkun

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman explains the well-known Chazal on the juxtaposition of *Sotah* and *Nazir*: seeing a *sotah* “in her disgrace” should motivate a person to abstain from wine. Beyond the simple concern of avoiding moral desensitization, he highlights a deeper link—both *sotah* and *nazir* are defined by hair: her hair is undone as shame, while his hair becomes *נוֹר אֱלֹקִי* (a holy “crown”). The broader מוסר: when a person “sees” spiritual failure that truly registers, it is not enough to avoid the wrongdoing; one must actively elevate and sanctify that very area as a תיקון.

I. The classic juxtaposition: Sotah followed by Nazir

A. Chazal’s question on סמיכות פרשיות

- Rabbi Shulman notes the Torah places the *parashah* of סוטה next to the *parashah* of נזיר.
- The Gemara in Sotah (as brought by Rashi) asks: why the juxtaposition?

B. The well-known principle

- “כל הרואה סוטה בקלקולה יזיר עצמו מן היין”
 - (Anyone who sees a sotah in her disgrace should abstain from wine.)

C. The simple peshat: avoid desensitization

- Rabbi Shulman explains the straightforward reading:
 - Witnessing such moral failure can desensitize a person.
 - Wine is often part of the pathway to עבירה, so the response is to create distance—abstain.
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II. A deeper connection: both Sotah and Nazir are uniquely defined by hair (1:00)

A. Sotah: ביזיון expressed through undoing her hair

- Rabbi Shulman emphasizes that the *sotah* is publicly shamed specifically through her hair being undone—her braids are opened in public.
- He notes: this episode is a major מקור for כיסוי ראש—the Torah-level expectation of hair covering is learned from *sotah*.

B. The Midrash: “she sinned with her hair”

- Rabbi Shulman brings the Midrash’s emphasis:
 - Because she used her hair as part of the sin—decorating it, beautifying it, drawing attention—her hair becomes the locus of her disgrace.

C. Nazir: hair as holiness—נזר אלוּקיוֹ

- In contrast, Rabbi Shulman points out that the *nazir* grows his hair into what the Torah calls:
 - “נזר אלוּקיוֹ” (the crown of his God).
- That hair is not incidental; it is central to the *nazir*’s identity and holiness.
- It ultimately is burned/placed as part of his korban process (a sign of how central it is).

III. “Kalkul” as “unwinding”: from her undone braid to his holy crown (3:01)

A. Reading “בקלקולה” through the hair motif

- Rabbi Shulman notes the word נתקלקל can describe an *unwound braid*.
- “Seeing her בקלקולה” is not only seeing “sin” abstractly—it is seeing the degradation symbolized in her hair.

B. The Torah’s response is not only avoidance, but transformation

- The person who “sees” is guided to become a *nazir*:
 - He stops drinking wine.
 - He is now required to grow hair—acquiring a visible “crown.”

C. Wine and the crown

- Rabbi Shulman stresses the built-in dependency:
 - The “crown” (his hair) exists only so long as he maintains abstinence from wine.
 - Drinking would collapse the status and require removing the “crown.”
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IV. The תיקון: sanctify the very area where others fell (4:00)

A. Not just “don’t repeat the mistake”

- Rabbi Shulman says it is true that one must avoid being נכשל in the same עבירה.
- But the Torah’s model here goes further:
 - Take the same trait/arena (here: beauty expressed via hair), and elevate it into קדושה.

B. Beauty as a spiritual test—examples

- Rabbi Shulman frames hair/beauty as a “lofty level” that can be misused.
- He mentions אבשלום as a case where beautiful hair became a stumbling block—showing how “crown-like” qualities can lead to downfall if not sanctified.

C. The nazir’s move: redirect greatness to Hashem

- The *sotah*’s “crown” contributed to her failure.
 - The *nazir* embodies the תיקון: to dedicate that same domain—beauty/greatness—to ה', turning it into נזר אלוהים.
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V. A broader מוסר: “redeeming sparks” and raising your own avodah where you “see” failure (5:30)

A. The obligation to actively rectify

- Rabbi Shulman applies the model beyond *sotah/nazir*:
 - When you see dishonesty, corruption, failures in לחבירו, or spiritual weakness—your job is not only self-protection.
 - You must **increase** your own עבודה in that realm as a תיקון.

B. The opportunity within communal decline

- When others fail, Rabbi Shulman describes two realities:
 1. A “gap” is created in what should have been achieved.
 2. It becomes an opportunity for someone else to “grab” those **איבודים**—to take up the **מצוות** / avodah that others neglected.

C. Concrete categories he lists

- Rabbi Shulman names common areas of **רפיון**:
 - **רפיון בתורה**
 - **רפיון במידות**
 - **רפיון בעבודה / בתפילה**
 - **רפיון בבין אדם לחבירו**
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VI. What it means to “see”: Rav Wolbe’s insight (7:00)

A. “Seeing” is defined by what registers

- Rabbi Shulman quotes Rav Wolbe:
 - If something uniquely bothers you—many people notice it, but you are the one who keeps bringing it up—that indicates you are the one who truly “sees” it.

B. “If it hit you, you’re responsible”

- Rabbi Shulman clarifies:
 - “Seeing” doesn’t mean literally encountering a sotah on the street.
 - It means it penetrated—*it registered internally*.
 - If it goes inside, it indicates:
 - You are capable of **תיקון** in that area,
 - and therefore you are **מחויב** to do that **תיקון**.
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VII. Closing: living alert to opportunity, aiming toward redemption (8:01)

A. Practical takeaway

- Rabbi Shulman encourages being attentive:
 - Identify what “hits” you in the world around you.
 - Treat it as a call to elevate and rectify.

B. Final berachah

- He closes with a tefillah that we should merit to elevate and rectify these opportunities and to see **ביאת משיח צדקנו במהרה בימינו**.
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In Summary

- Chazal read the Sotah–Nazir juxtaposition as: “**כל הרואה סוטה בקלקולה יזיר עצמו מן היין**.”
- Rabbi Shulman highlights a deeper axis: **hair**—her hair is undone in shame; his hair becomes **נזר אלוֹקִי** (a holy crown).
- The Torah’s response to witnessing failure is not only avoidance but **תיקון**: sanctify the very area where others fell.
- “Seeing” means what truly registers inside you; per Rav Wolbe, that inner reaction signals both **capacity and obligation** to step up in that domain.