

Do as I Do—Not Just as I Say

הַפְּטָרָה: שׁוֹפְטִים יג:ח—ת: וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הַנָּךְ הִרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֵּן וְעַתָּה אַל תִּשְׁתֵּי יַיִן וְשִׁכָר וְאַל תֹּאכְלִי כָּל טָמְאָה בִּי נְזִיר אֱלֹקִים יְהִיָּה הַנֶּעַד מִן הַבֶּטֶן... וַיַּעֲתֶר מְנוּחַ אֶל ה' וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדוֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּ יָבוֹא נָא עוֹד אֵלֵינוּ וְיִוְרְנוּ מֵה נַעֲשֶׂה לְנֶעַד הַיּוֹלֵד.

Haftarah: He said to me, “Behold you will conceive and give birth to a son. And now, do not drink wine or aged wine, and do not eat anything contaminated, for the boy shall be a nazir unto G-d from the womb...” Manoach prayed to Hashem and said, “Please, my Master, may the man of G-d whom You sent come now again to us and teach us what we should do with the lad who is to be born.” (Shoftim 13:7-8)

Why did Manoach ask Hashem to send the angel “to teach us what we should do with the lad who is to be born”? Didn’t he know the laws of *nezirus*, which are clearly written in the Torah? Even though *Chazal* call Manoach an *am ha’aretz*, an ignoramus, was he so great an *am ha’aretz* that he was unfamiliar with laws that even schoolchildren knew? And if he wanted to learn the intricate details of *nezirus* that are passed down only in the Oral Torah, was there a shortage of Torah scholars and judges who could have clarified the details? Why did he need the angel to return? Furthermore, when Hashem answered Manoach’s prayer and the angel appeared a second time, the angel only repeated the instructions that he had conveyed the first time he appeared, as he said (*Shoftim* 13:13-14), וַיֹּאמֶר מְלֹאךְ ה' אֶל מְנוּחַ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֶל הָאִשָּׁה תִּשְׁמַר. מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִגִּפְּנֵי הַיַּיִן לֹא תֹאכַל, וַיֹּאמֶר מְלֹאךְ ה' וַיִּיַן וְשִׁכָר וְכָל טָמְאָה אֶל תִּשְׁתֵּי וְכָל טָמְאָה אֶל תֹּאכַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיָּהּ תִּשְׁמַר—*The angel of G-d said to Manoach, “Of everything that I spoke to the woman, she should beware. Of anything that comes*

from the grapevine, she shall not eat; wine or aged wine, she shall not drink; anything contaminated, she shall not eat. Everything that I commanded her, she shall observe." What, then, was the purpose of the angel's reappearance?

A novel idea is suggested here: Manoach did not request that the angel reappear to clarify the laws of *nezirus*; he knew them. Rather, he wished to ask the angel about matters of *chinuch*, educating children. Manoach wanted to understand how he would be able to raise a child with the additional restrictions and holiness of a *nazir* if he, the child's father, wouldn't follow these restrictions himself. Indeed, when the angel returned, he said, "You are right, Manoach. The father of a child who will be a *nazir* must also conduct himself as a *nazir*."

When we reread the words of the angel, we see this idea clearly. Grammatically, the words *תאכל*, *תשׁמר*, and *תשׁתה* address either the third person feminine or the second person masculine in the future tense. Thus, the angel's instructions can also be translated as, "Of everything that I spoke to the woman, *you* should beware. Of anything that comes from the grapevine, *you* shall not eat; wine or aged wine, *you* shall not drink; anything contaminated, *you* shall not eat. Everything that I commanded her, *you* shall observe." Manoach was told that he, too, must adhere to the laws of *nezirus*.

Children learn from what their parents do far more than from what their parents say. Just as a parent cannot raise a child to be a *nazir* unless he conducts himself as a *nazir*, no parent can expect his child to adhere to good behavior that he himself does not embrace.

Here is an awesome challenge for Jewish parents. The *chinuch* of a Jewish child starts in the crib. *Chazal* tell us that as soon as the child is able to understand, parents should talk to him *בְּלשׁוֹן הַקִּדּוּשׁ*—*in the language of holiness*; namely, to tell the child that there is a Creator Who has created us, Who knows us, Who watches over us and Who has given us mitzvos to keep. And as soon as the child is able to talk, his father and mother have to teach him the fundamentals of *emunah* in the Torah (*תּוֹרָה*) (*צְנִיחָה לְנֹחַ מִשֶּׁה*) and *emunah* in Hashem (*שְׁמַע קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע*).

The first stories a child has to hear are the life stories of the *Avos*, the events of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the giving of the Torah, and so forth.

It goes without saying that one of the basic conditions of successful *chinuch* is that the parents become role models for the child. The *pasuk* *אִישׁ אָמוּ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ*—*A person shall fear his mother and father*, is preceded by the words *קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיּוּ כִּי קְדוּשׁ אָנִי הַשֵּׁם*. You yourselves have to be *קְדוּשִׁים*—

holy. Only if parents are living examples of the first *pasuk* can they expect their children to take them seriously, to respect and obey them.

There are two kinds of *chinuch*, and they go side by side. One is through teaching, as we are instructed on Pesach, וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ—*You shall teach your son*. The other is the *chinuch* that emanates from our own example to influence our children by that which we do. This lesson, which is called לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם—*so that your generations will know*, we impart to them especially on Sukkos, when we are not commanded to speak about the wanderings of our forefathers in the desert, but only to sit in a sukkah together with our children. What follows is that when, for instance, a child sees his father learning Torah, whether all the time or part of the time, or even only in the precious hours of the early morning or late at night, the child has a role model to follow. Also, fathers and mothers can לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשְּׁבֻת לְדוֹרוֹתֵם בְּרִית עוֹלָם—*make the Shabbos an eternal bond* between them and Hashem for their children simply by being an example of *shemiras Shabbos*.

Selected Speeches, pages 97-98

