

## **Matot 5771**

### **Rabbi Aharon Ziegler**

Parshat Matot begins with a discussion of Nedarim (vows). The Mitzvah of Nedarim is very unique, in that the Halachic impact is based on the strength of an individual Jew's private initiative. This is in stark contrast to all other Mitzvot, where the prohibitions are imposed by a command from HaShem or in accordance with the thoughts of Chazal (Sages). Yet with a Neder, even a 13 year old boy or a 12 year old girl is granted the ability to create a prohibition (an Issur Cheftza) with all the halachic implications and consequences. An unfulfilled Neder or a person who transgresses a Neder is punished with Malkot (lashes)- as is the case with any Biblical prohibition. If a person made a Neder to refrain from eating bread but then he did eat bread, the Gemara teaches that he is liable for Malkot- ***just as if he had eaten non-kosher food!*** Of course, that Issur Cheftza will apply ONLY upon the maker of the Neder, for one cannot prohibit something that does not belong to him. [*Ein Adam Oser Davar She'eiono Shelo*]

How can we explain this astonishing idea that each and every simple Jew has the awesome power to create new prohibitions and obligations?

I heard a beautiful explanation from Rav Shlomo Sobol, that Nedarim stem from emotions. They are produced naturally; they are the result of sentiments: I feel a certain way. Obviously I cannot tell someone else, "We must declare a Neder right now". Your personality causes you to feel a certain way, but others may feel differently. They are your challenges, your personal efforts and your own sense of gratitude. They do not obligate others.

We tend to disparage emotions and belittle their value. Experiencing a miracle or a spiritual uplifting may move a person to accept certain spiritual matters upon himself. Similarly, when a close friend becomes ill, a person may be stirred to make a number of resolutions in the hope that the friend will be cured in their merit. These are feelings; they are not permanent; they are transient and they are sentimental. There is an intellectual tendency to deride emotions.

But the truth is, that emotions are a profound manifestation of human nature and serve as a basis for our Avodat HaShem. We must protect, preserve and respect our emotions. They are very important and they assist us throughout our lives. If we value our religious, ethical and spiritual feelings, they will continue to express themselves and help us.

At certain times, a Neder may be the result of a momentary spiritual high. But many of life's positive inspirations were caused by transitory emotions. A Neder takes that momentary feeling and extends it. A Neder permits a person to capture that feeling and to use it for practical and constructive decisions and projects. Thus, Nedarim infuse our lives with emotions and, can bring us closer to HaShem. My Kollel shiur –Thursday July 21, 10:00am- "Hilchot HaTarat Nedarim"