

Parshas Nosso

By Rabbi Mordechai Frankel

This week's haftorah tells us the story of how a *malach* informed Manoach and his wife about the birth of *Shimshon*. The *malach* told Manoach's wife that she will have a son who will save *Klal Yisroel*, and that this son should be a *nazir*. She relayed the information to her husband Manoach, who *davened* that the *malach* should return. The *malach* subsequently reappeared to Manoach's wife, who hurried to tell her husband. The *possuk* (*Shoftim* 13:11) then states that Manoach followed his wife to meet the angel – וילך מנוח אחרי אשתו.

The *Gemara Brachos* (61a) tells us that *Rav Nachman* deduced from this *possuk* that Manoach was an '*am ha'aretz*' (unlearned), as he was not aware of the *halacha* that a person should not walk behind his wife. As *Rashi* explains, doing so is considered a '*genai*' (degrading). The *Gemara* responds that this is not necessarily the case, as the *possuk* could be interpreted to mean that Manoach followed her advice, rather than that he physically walked behind her.¹

The *Gemara* concludes that a person should not walk behind his wife and should certainly take care not to walk behind another woman in the street. The *Rambam* and *Shulchan Aruch* both quote this *halacha* that one should not follow a woman in the street.² The *Achronim* ask why the *Rambam* and *Shulchan Aruch* omit the injunction to avoid doing so even with one's own wife. They explain that the restriction not to walk behind one's own wife applies specifically to *talmidei chachomim*, as it is a *genai* for them to follow any woman. *Rav Nachman* therefore concluded that Manoach, who did walk behind his wife, was undoubtedly an *am ha'aretz*. Because this restriction applies specifically to *talmidei chachomim* and not to all people, the *Rambam* and *Shulchan Aruch* omitted it. However, the restriction not to walk behind a woman who is not one's wife applies to all men and is therefore codified in *halacha*.³

Regarding this prohibition to avoid walking behind a woman in the street, the *mefarshim* debate what distance should be maintained. The *Ariza"l* and others maintain that the restriction is limited to walking within her *daled amos*, although the *Radvaz* is more stringent.⁴ Even accepting the more lenient opinion, it would seem that a person has to take care not to follow a woman in the street within her *daled amos*.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l once met *Rav Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg zt"l*, author of *Teshuvos Tzitz Eliezer*. *Rav Shlomo Zalman* asked him whether this restriction applies when entering a bus. For example, if the wife of an *odom gadol* is waiting to get onto a bus, should a person honor her by inviting her to enter before him or should he avoid doing so due to the concern that he will be following behind her when he enters the bus? The two of them discussed the question but did not reach a firm conclusion.

The *Tzitz Eliezer* subsequently wrote a letter to *Rav Shlomo Zalman* informing him that he found a *heter* for this in one of the early *achronim*.⁵ The *sefer Leket Yosher* is a record of the *minhagim* and *pesakim* of *Rav Yisroel Isserlin* (1390-1460), author of the *Teshuvos Terumos Hadeshen*, written by one of his *talmidim*. The *Leket Yosher* quotes his *rebbe* as having said that it is permitted to walk behind the wife of a *chaver* (i.e. a *talmid chochom*) nowadays, because we are no longer as restricted regarding following a woman.⁶

The *Tzitz Eliezer* asks why the *Leket Yosher* permits this specifically with the wife of a *chaver*. If the prohibition no longer applies, it should be permitted with every woman. He answers that the *Leket Yosher*

was presumably discussing a situation where a person wanted to show honor to the wife of a *chaver* by allowing her to go in front of him, similar to our question regarding boarding a bus. The *Tzitz Eliezer* explains further that in the days of *Chazal* women generally stayed home, and it was uncommon for a woman to walk around outside. For this reason, following a woman in the street may have led a man to *hirhur aveira*. However, in the time of the *Leket Yosher*, and certainly in our times, it is common for women to be outside and there is less of a likelihood of *hirhur*. For this reason, the *Leket Yosher* quoted the *Terumos Hadeshen* as permitting walking behind a woman in the street if necessary.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach responded that he is in agreement with this *heter*. However, he explained the *psak* of the *Leket Yosher* slightly differently. *Rav Shlomo Zalman* explained that in the days of *Chazal* when there were fewer woman in the street, it was easily possible to avoid walking behind them. However, in the time of the *Leket Yosher*, and certainly nowadays where there are many women in the street, if a person steps aside to avoid standing behind one woman he will probably find himself behind another woman. As it is difficult to avoid, then at least in a situation where it would be considered to be bad manners to go before her, one may follow after her.⁷

While there may be leniencies nowadays, this *halacha* did apply in the time of *Manoach*. *Rav Nachman* therefore concluded that *Manoach* was an *am ha'aretz*, as *Rav Nachman* understood the *possuk* to mean that *Manoach* literally followed his wife. However, this is difficult to understand, as *Chazal* elsewhere describe *Manoach* as a great person. The *Midrash Rabbah (Bamidbar Rabbah 10:5)* in this week's *parsha* is *doreish* the *possuk*

(שופטים יג, ב) – “And there was (*va'yehi*) a man from Tzorah, from the family of Dan, and his name was *Manoach*”.

The *Midrash* says that *Manoach* was equal in greatness to thirty-one *tzaddikim*, which is the *gematria* of the word *va'yehi*. The *Midrash* adds that the phrase “and his name was *Manoach*” also indicates that he was a *tzaddik*, as the *possuk* would otherwise have stated “and *Manoach* was his name”, as is the convention in *Tenach* when naming *tzaddikim* and *reshoim*. Furthermore, the *Gr"e* quotes the *Zohar* as stating that *Manoach* was a *gadol hador*.⁸ How then could *Rav Nachman* call him an *am ha'aretz*?

Rav Dessler addresses this question. He quotes the *Mishna* in *Avos (2:5)* which states that an *am ha'aretz* cannot be a *chossid*. *Rabbeinu Yonah* explains that an *am ha'aretz* cannot be *chossid* but could be a *tzaddik*. He may be a *tzaddik* who fully keeps the *Torah* and keeps everything that he is commanded to do. However, only a *talmid chochom* is able use his *chochmas hatorah* to attain the lofty *madreiga* of a *chossid* who acts *lifnim mi'shuras hadin*. Based on this, *Rav Dessler* writes that *Manoach* was both an *am ha'aretz* and a *tzaddik*, and the two are not contradictory.⁹

The *Alter* of *Slabodka* offers a different answer. Immediately before the *Gemara* in *Brachos* discusses *Manoach*, the *Gemara* discusses *Odom* and *Chava*. The *Gemara* brings an opinion that *Odom* and *Chava* were created *דו פרצופין*, which means that the two of them were connected together, *Odom* on one side and *Chava* on the other. The *Gemara* asks that, if so, which one of them followed the other when they walked? The *Gemara* answers that it reasonable that *Odom* walked first, as we have learnt that it is a *genai* for a man to follow a woman. This occurred before the sin of the *eitz ha'daas*, and at a time when there was no-one else in the world. Nevertheless, the *Gemara* feels that since *Chava* was created to be an *eizer* to *Odom* it would not be *derech ertz* for her to go first and him to follow.

The *Alter* of *Slabodka* writes that, apart from the *chochma* of *Torah*, there is a second type of *chochma*. This is the *chochma* of the *briyah*, which is the *chochma* of the structure and order of the world and the

derech ha'erezt that *Hashem* imbued the world with. *Derech Eretz* is *kodma la'Torah*, and this fundamental *chochma* is what *Shlomo HaMelech* had in mind when he wrote (*Mishlei* 3:19) 'בחכמה יסד' 'ארץ, "Hashem established the earth with *chochma*". Since logic dictates that the structure and order of the world is such that the man should lead and the woman should follow, if *Manoach* was not aware of this then he was deficient in this *chochma*, the *chochma* of the *briyah*. This shortcoming was sufficient for *Chazal* to call him an *am ha'aretz* in this *chochma*.¹⁰

It is fitting that the *Alter* of *Slabodka* gave this answer, as this concept was an integral part of the *toras hamussar* of *Slabodka*. A person has to be a *sholeim* not only in *Torah* but also in *chochmas ha'briyah* and *derech erez*.

1. וסיים הגמ' שם (ברכות דף סא ע"א), "אמר רב אש, ולמאי דקאמר רב נחמן שמנוח עם הארץ היה אפילו בי רב נמי לא קרא, שנאמר (בראשית כד, סא) ותקם רבקה ונערוותיה ותרכבנה על הגמלים ותלכנה אחרי האיש, ולא לפני האיש". ועי' במהרש"א וסמיכת חכמים שם ובעיון יעקב ורי"ף על העין יעקב שם מש"כ בכל זה.
2. כן פסקו הרמב"ם פכ"א מהל' איסורי ביאה הל' כב ושו"ע אהע"ז סי' כא סעי' א.
3. כ"כ בשו"ת דברי יציב אהע"ז סי' לט ס"ק ב. והנה לשון הרמב"ם הוא, "מי שפגע באשה בשוק אסור לו להלך אחריה אלא רץ ומסלקה לצדדין או לאחוריו, וכל המהלך בשוק אחרי אשה הרי זה מקלי עמי הארץ". ולפי התירוץ הנ"ל צריך לחלק בין 'עם הארץ' לקלי עמי הארץ, שתלמיד חכם אינו הולך אף אחר אשתו, ועם הארץ הולך אחר אשתו אבל אינו הולך אחר נשים אחרים, וקלי עמי הארץ הולכים אף אחר נשים אחרים.
4. השו"ע שם כתב, "פגע אשה בשוק אסור להלך אחריה". ופי' הבאר היטב (שם ס"ק ב) בזה"ל, "היינו בתוך ד' אמותיה, מהרא"י ובית הלל. וכנסת הגדולה בשם הרדב"ז ח"ב כתב דלא סגי כשירחיק ד' אמות אלא כל שאינו מרוחק שאינו מכיר ומבחין בה בהלוכתה ובתנועותיה אסור". ובפת"ש (שם ס"ק א) כתב שמה שהביא מהרדב"ז הוא בשו"ת רדב"ז ח"ב סי' תש"ע. ומש"כ הבאר היטב "מהרא"י" הוא ט"ס וצ"ל "מהאר"י", וכדמבואר בשו"ע הוצאת מכון ירושלים שהמקור הוא בכוונת האר"י לר"ח ויטאל פרי עץ חיים שער הנהגת הלימוד בכוונת קריאת המשנה.
5. שו"ת ציץ אליעזר ח"ט סי' נ.
6. לקט יושר יו"ד עמ' 37, וז"ל, "אמר שמותר לילך אחר אשת חבר ... משום דבזמן הזה אין אנו מוזהרין כל כך מלילך אחרי אשה".
7. תשובת הגרשז"א בשו"ת ציץ אליעזר שם, נדפס ג"כ בשו"ת מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' צא אות כג.
8. הגר"א (אמרי נועם על ברכות דף סא ע"א) כתב שבזהר איתא שמנוח היה גדול יותר מכל בני דורו, וצ"ע לאיזה זהר כיוון הגר"א. ועי' במגדים חדשים (במדבר עמ' קנט) במה שהאריך בכל זה.
9. מכתב מאליהו ח"ב עמ' 269, וכבר כתב כע"ז בכלי יקר (הקדמון) על שופטים, הובא במגדים חדשים שם.
10. הסבא מסלבודקה בספר אור הצפון ח"ג עמ' יט, ועיי"ש היטב מה שביאר עוד בזה כי קצרת'. ודברי האור הצפון הללו הובאו בספר נחלת שמעון על שופטים ח"ב סי' לד, ועיי"ש מה שהאריך הנחלת שמעון בכל זה. וע"ע בספר שיחות הסא מסלבודקה ח"א עמ' רנז.