

All the days of his abstinence he is holy unto Hashem. (6:8)

The *Torah* allows one to become a *nazir* voluntarily. This status precludes one from eating or drinking grape products or from coming into contact with a dead body. In addition, the *nazir's* hair may not be cut. By becoming a *nazir*, one enters into a state of extreme sanctity in which what is permissible -- and taken for granted by the average Jew -- becomes incongruous with the *nazir's* elevated status. *Chazal* explain the reason that the *Torah* juxtaposes the laws of the *nazir* upon those of the *sotah*, wayward wife. One who sees a *sotah* in her degradation should accept upon himself to become a *nazir* and abstain from wine. Wine and alcoholic beverages cause one to lose control of his faculties and sin. Hence, the *sotah* serves as a bitter example of one who lost his self control.

The *nazir* seems to be a person who senses within himself an inability to quell the passions and desires which his *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, is able to conjure. He does not know when or how to stop. What should he do? His only recourse is to abstain totally from all pleasure. Thus, he will be guaranteed success over his *yetzer hora*. After all, if he runs away from everything, he will not have anything over which to lose control. Consequently, the *Torah* tells the *nazir*, "Stay away from the vineyard, for you cannot manage exposure to anything that might bring you in contact with your desires." The *nazir* who sees the debasement of the *sotah* perceives that the only way to spare himself from such a fate is to "run away" from wine and all pleasures that might undermine his ability to control himself.

There is an obvious question that begs explanation. Is there a greater deterrent to sin than seeing the tragic punishment of the wayward wife? On the contrary, the person who has witnessed this phenomenon can drink wine - because he will be cautious not to go beyond his bounds. He clearly sees the results of letting oneself go. Why, then, is it necessary for him to abstain completely from wine?

Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, gives a profound insight into human nature that helps us to understand what motivates the *nazir* to refrain from wine. While on the one hand, the *nazir* sees the bitter outcome of passion unleashed, he also sees that people continue to sin regardless of the consequences. Is it any different today when people know the terrible effect various drugs and intoxicants have on the body - and they still go ahead and indulge? Why? How many funerals does one have to attend before the message becomes clear? The answer is that while some people are suffering, others are not. Human nature -- or, more accurately, the *yetzer hora*-- demands that we look at the "positive" - those who continue to sin unpunished and unhindered. Is there a more influential motive for sin than seeing a successful sinner?