

Any man whose wife shall go astray and commit treachery against him. (5:12)...A man or woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem. (6:2)

The *parsha* of *nazir* is juxtaposed upon the laws of the *sotah*. These two diverse experiences, with the *nazir* personifying the apex of sanctity and the *sotah* acting in a manner that reflects the nadir of depravity, are as diverse from one another as could be. Yet, the Torah places them near one another. *Chazal* (*Bereishis* 63a) explain that one who observes a *sotah* in her degradation should separate himself from wine which can, under the wrong circumstances, lead to sinful behavior. Let us attempt to portray a hypothetical scenario rationally. A holy *tzaddik*, righteous person, walks through the street and chances upon a filthy drunk laying in his vomit. Imagine that we tell the *tzaddik*, "Be careful not to become like him." The *tzaddik* would look at us in shock, disdain or even anger. The mere fact that we would presume that a man of his spiritual and moral stature could fall to such depravity is insulting. Yet, *Chazal* teach that one who sees a *sotah* in her degradation should become a *nazir*!

Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zl, understands *Chazal's* message quite practically. When you come upon a person who is acting degenerately, you must create a *siyag*, fence/restriction, to protect yourself from ever falling into such a circumstance. Now, if this must be the reaction to chancing upon one isolated *sotah*, what can we say if we are exposed to a multitude of *sotos*/unscrupulous, perverted individuals, who conceal their corruption behind a veil of piety? How careful must we be not to fall prey to the traps presented us by superficial effects that conceal a charlatan – a wolf in sheep's clothing.

We can combat the evil influences that would harm us in one of two ways. One approach is to battle them head on, and the other – more practical – approach is to protect ourselves from their harmful influence by strengthening our spiritual commitment and resolve. *Chazal* guide us with the words, *Yazir atzmo*; "He should separate himself" (by becoming a *nazir*). *Rav Elyashiv* compares this to a very narrow bridge. One person alone cannot safely traverse the bridge. Only two people together, holding on to one another, can do it. If two begin the crossing together and one decides to leave, thus stranding the other person in the middle of the bridge, the last thing the fellow would do is yell at the fellow who left. Screaming will not bring him back. Right now, he must concentrate on getting across safely. Once he has crossed and gotten over the trauma, he can go over to the fellow who went AWOL in middle of the bridge and confront him. There is a time and place for everything. When a large segment of the Jewish community has drifted elsewhere in an attempt to partake and enjoy the prohibited fruits of a secular lifestyle, the few hardy members that remain committed must create a force of restraint and restriction to protect themselves and their families.

History has sadly proven that a relaxation of the Torah's prohibitions ultimately leads to complete

disavowment and alienation. The early secular Jews were, for the most part, observant. They felt that the pressure of the Enlightenment, spurred on by the French Revolution, made life outside of the shackles of the Jewish ghetto much more appealing. In order to “save” those who were drifting away, the organizers felt that reforming Judaism would keep them in the fold. Two hundred years later, we have only to read the PEW reports to acknowledge that it did far from save them. As a result, ninety percent of these Jews know absolutely nothing about Judaism and do not identify with it.