

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

In the *Pri Tzaddik* (Naso 13), *Horav Tzadok HaKohen, zl, m'Lublin*, observes a striking disparity with regard to the laws associated with *sotah* and *nazir* in the Torah and their placement in the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*. In the Torah, the laws of *sotah*, the wayward wife, precede those of the *nazir*, in contrast, in the *Talmud*, *Meseches Nazir*, precedes *Meseches Sotah*. *Rav Tzadok* posits that an important moral lesson can be derived from the Torah's sequence of *sotah* before *nazir*. The *sotah* is a woman who is suspected of acting immorally outside of her marriage. A woman whose infidelity plummets to such a nadir must have imbibed too much, and, while inebriated, lost her moral compass. A woman in control under normal conditions does not abase herself in such a manner.

Chazal (*Sotah 2, Berachos 63a*) explain the juxtaposition of *nazir* upon *sotah*. As a lesson, one who witnesses a *sotah* in her degradation should abstain from wine by becoming a *nazir*. Under normal circumstances, witnessing the tragic consequences of intoxication should sufficiently compel a person to realize that he must stop. If he is to protect himself from falling into the abyss of spiritual and moral malaise, he must distance himself from wine. (Veritably, this applies to any intoxicating substance that impairs a person's cognitive ability).

Rav Tzadok ratches up this idea with a more important principle. Visiting the *Bais Hamikdash* was not, for most people, a daily occurrence. It would be unusual for an individual to witness the degradation of a *sotah* during one of those rare moments that brought him to the *Bais Hamikdash*. For such an unlikely event to occur, at a time when he just "happened" to visit the *Bais Hamikdash*, is clearly not a coincidence. This is a Heavenly manipulation in order to issue a wake-up call to this person. He may unconsciously be concealing character flaws that could lead to him becoming a spiritual and moral train wreck. Hashem is conveying to him, "Do something quick! Take action immediately!" We cannot view any event in life as random. One who sees or experiences something out of the ordinary should not ignore it. Hashem is speaking to him. Hashem is attempting to wake him up from his lethargy. It is either now or never.

The opposite sequence in the *Talmud*, in which *Meseches Sotah* follows *Meseches Nazir*, reveals a lesson of greater urgency to us. Hashem communicates to us via messages hidden in events that occur – both unusual and even ordinary day-to-day events. When that happens, we should take note and actively respond by doing something concerning that message. Things happen which we most often take for granted. For the most part, we do so because we are not looking for a message. Regardless of our message awareness or lack thereof, we should make every effort to be cognizant of our spiritual and moral failing (or potential failings) and take action to correct them.

Rav Tzadok observes that Hashem communicates with us via wisdom. One of the essential elements of wisdom is the ability to foresee what might happen and do something to prevent problems before they occur. One need not necessarily be a brilliant person; he just needs to have common sense. *Haroe' es ha'nolad*, to see the outcome of one's actions, is the barometer by which a *chacham* is measured. Let me add that even the wisest person who keeps his eyes closed will see nothing. On the other hand, such a person is far from wise.

One should not wait to see a *sotah* to realize that he must become wise. A wake-up call is just that – it occurs to wake up one who is asleep. One who preempts any issues by taking the necessary precautionary measure is a wise person. He does not wait for the train wreck to hear the message that he is on the wrong track.