

A man or woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a Nazarite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem. (6:2)

The laws of *Nazir* are juxtaposed upon the previous chapter that dealt with the *sotah*, wayward wife. *Chazal* derive from here that he who witnesses a *sotah* in her degradation should prohibit wine to himself by becoming a *Nazir*. The *sotah* had given in to her sensual passions and let her pursuit of physical pleasure overwhelm her responsibility as a wife, her obligation as a Jewess and her mandate as a human being. Her experience indicates that when one is under the influence of the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, he becomes easy prey to all forms of degeneracy. Wine intoxicates one's mind. It has the power to justify the most base behavior and legitimize actions which under normal circumstances would be viewed as vile and depraved. Seeing a *sotah* in a circumstance that was probably the result of wine or an intoxicating lifestyle, should arouse an individual to choose to adopt a spiritual life, one that transcends the physical impulses that led to sin.

The *Nazir* symbolizes holiness. He sanctifies himself in an area that in itself is permissible. He chooses to go one step further. On the other extreme is the *sotah*, a woman who follows her heart's passion and commits a sin that is the epitome of depravity. The *Torah* draws a relationship between these two extreme types of people. Indeed, one who sees a *sotah* during her degradation should take the *Nazirite* vow. How are we to understand this?

Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, explains that once Adam *HaRishon* sinned, the concept of absolute bad or good disappeared. Every phenomenon has two perspectives. It can be good; it can also be bad. It depends upon one's attitude and intention. Let us take wine for example. On the one hand, it is the symbol of *kedushah*, holiness. It is used for *Kiddush*, for every gathering of *simchah shel mitzvah*, and for the *Nesachim*, libations, in the *Bais HaMikdash*. On the other hand, it symbolizes sin, causing intoxication, memory loss, and lack of self-control that can lead to grave sin. So, what is it, bad or good? It is neither - it is both. One who drinks wine for the appropriate purpose, according to the proper measurement, will arouse within himself emotions of joy that can lead to such spiritual ascendancy as *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration. If one has the wrong intentions, however, if his base desires take hold of him and control his mind, then wine can lead to the most perverse transgressions.

Interestingly, when Yaakov and Eisav vied for their father's blessing, Yaakov brought along wine with his sacrifice, while Eisav did not. Moreover, when Yitzchak blessed Yaakov he blessed him with *tirosh*, vineyards. He did not give this blessing to Eisav. Why not? *Horav Sorotzkin* explains that Yaakov recognized the value of wine, the incredible opportunities that wine could engender. He, therefore, felt that at a time of blessing, when his father would be inspired to transmit to him the lofty blessings from Hashem, what better stimulant than wine to bring out the inherent joy that would accompany this moment. Yitzchak, likewise, blessed Yaakov with vineyards. Conversely, Eisav looked at the downside of wine, the debauchery and degeneracy that it could catalyze. At a

time of blessing, the last thing he sought to bring would be wine. Yitzchak, recognizing well his son Eisav's nature, steered clear of wine when he blessed him.

One who sees a *sotah* in her degradation, witnessing the evil wine can catalyze, must isolate himself from wine. He must take a *Nazirite* vow because he might stumble and fall into the evil pit of wine. Witnessing degradation creates a problem in the individual. He must immediately address that problem and limit its growth.