

# JUST TO SILENCE THE MIND

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and you shall say to them: A man or woman who sets himself apart by making a Nazirite vow to abstain for the sake of the Lord He shall abstain from new wine and aged wine; he shall not drink [even] vinegar made from new wine or aged wine, nor shall he drink anything in which grapes have been steeped, and he shall eat neither fresh grapes nor dried ones. For the entire duration of his abstinence, he shall not eat any product of the grape vine, from seeds to skins.(Bamidbar 6:1-2)

Why is the Subject of the Nazir juxtaposed to the subject of the Sota? To teach you that anyone who sees a Sota in her destruction should refrain from wine. - (Rashi)

Why is wine the substance of choice to refrain from. When someone sees a Sota he should become a Nazir and keep himself distant from wine. Why? What does wine have to do with a Sota?

The Talmud offers a few direct causative factors relating the wine with the crime of the Sota. It was the Sota's indulgence in wine that accelerated her downfall or opened the door to her relaxing of standards. The wine was a player before the event, so the Nazir is cautioned to stay away and hold the reigns of discipline so he does not fall prey to the same problem. Fine!

There may be a different reason to of refraining from wine even after the fall of the Sota. There may be a huge hint in a Mishne at the very end of Tractate Sota that talks about the condition of the society at the very edge of human history, right before Moshiach. It lists fifteen items-signs to look out for and these are the first three. "In the period preceding the coming of *Moshiach* ,Chutzpah-1) insolence will increase -2) prices will soar – 3) The vineyard will produce, yet wine will be expensive..."

What's the hint? It can be found in the sequence of societal symptoms, the maladies of that time. There will be an abundance of Chutzpah! What's Chutzpah? Everyone know what Chutzpah is! It can be found in the American Heritage Dictionary already. What exactly is it? When someone willfully violates a serious social barrier or steps intentionally beyond the boundaries of his or her conscience they are acting with Chutzpah! What happens when a person acts with Chutzpah? What happens internally? Do they feel good or bad! How bad do they feel? What does one do about that bad feeling, the ringing of the violated conscience within? Well, there are two choices! One is to apologize or commit to never touching that hot stove of the heart again. That is the healthier but harder option.

Now we come to the second sign, that prices will soar. Some explain it as a phenomenon of "inflation". Others say the actual style of life will also increase. The average and the poor man have access to things that King Louis never dreamt of. Everyone has a shower, drives a car, has music cd's and cell phones. For the right price you can get anything! The consumer society is driven to get it!

Finally we arrive at the last of the first three- "The vine gives off its fruit but the price is still high!" How is that possible? Anyone with familiarity of Economics 101 knows that when the supply is high the price is low! That's the answer, Rashi says, the demand is high because people are drinking to get drunk. It's a society driven to distraction that needs to drown out the small thin but persistent voice of the conscience that whispers in protest of the continuous violation of and dangerous shrinking of its moral boundaries. That includes the multi- billion dollar entertainment industry and all the gadgetry too. It's a craze for different types of wine **just to silence the mind!**

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