

A LIFE SAVING LESSON

by Rabbi Label Lam

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

There's a glaring question in this statement of Rashi. With a little information, it will become apparent. A Nazir is someone who goes on a specific 30 day spiritual diet to "detoxify" himself. The situation involving a Sotah is one which arises when a husband suspects and formally investigates whether his wife has placed herself in a position of impropriety. When a doubt still lingers over whether there was actually an act of infidelity, she is offered a sort of truth serum to resolve the doubt. If she drinks the Sotah water and is found innocent, then she is promised a blessing of children. If, however she drinks it and she is in violation, then she swells up and dies.

Let's say you saw a friend drive up to a certain non-kosher drive-thru window and buy himself a DOUBLE CHEESE WHOPPER AND A MILK SHAKE! He then surreptitiously pulls his car to the side and (without a blessing) opens his mouth wide to take the first bite. You watch in amazement as a dark rain cloud gathers spontaneously as if it had a mind and mission of its own. As your friend begins to sink in his teeth...WHAM! A bolt of lightning is launched from the cloud leaving him and his whopper a charred piece of toast.

Are you now **more** or **less** committed to the discipline of keeping kosher? The fright of that experience is enough to put a pause before eating anything of doubtful kosher status. The lesson could not have been taught more clearly. Why then if someone witnesses the Sotah in her hour of doom, do they then need a spiritual realignment? After all, he's seen "the hand of G-d" in action. Why should he of all people become a Nazir? He is the last one that needs to take on this regimen.

Reb Levi Yitzchok from Berditchov tzl. had been working on himself, in a private setting, trying to overcome some challenge, on whatever high level he was struggling, when he resigned to accept that it was just not possible for him to change.

Immediately afterward he stepped out into the street where he witnessed an argument between a wagon driver and a store owner. The store owner wanted the wagon driver to unload the goods into his store. The driver insisted, "I can't!" The store owner barked back. "It's not that you can't! It's that you don't want to!" The fight went on like this with ever increasing intensity, "I can't!" "It's not that you can't! It's that you don't want to!" Then a surprise!

The store owner quietly reached into his pocket and waved a few bills and said, "What if I offered

you 50 Zlotas? Would you be able to?" The wagon driver answered soberly, "I'll give it try." Reb Levi Yitzchok marveled that the wagon driver was indeed then quite capable of doing the job. It was not that he was not able. It really was because he did not really want to. He also understood that this incident played out before his eyes to instruct him about his own circumstance. If he could only meditate on and deeply realize the true value of the accomplishment at hand then he could gain enough power to leverage himself to do the impossible.

Reb Levi Yitzchok realized immediately that if he saw this event it was meant for his eyes. He was being shown this scene for a pointed reason. That's how great people think! The Torah wants us to think like Tzadikim too. If this person who was in the Beis HaMikdash one day happened to have seen what he saw, then it was designed and prepared and acted out before his eyes for a special reason.

Imagine, now, you are hustling on the highway at a very fast pace when traffic slows to a crawl. Eventually the cause of heavy traffic is known as you have your turn to rubberneck while passing the scene of an overturned car. The police and EMT people are standing around looking quietly morose. It seems the worst has happened. For the next 10 minutes your foot wishes to press even harder on the gas pedal but you recall that deadly scene and arrest yourself. After a time it is already an ancient memory. You might wonder, why HASHEM showed you that picture, or why you had to hear some other piece of distressing news and then figure out how you can take that tragedy and switch it for **a life saving lesson**.