

A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

Background

The Torah lays out a very elaborate and detailed plan for a woman who is accused by her husband of adultery. Part of the process is that she is marched out in a public display, much to her embarrassment. Then she drinks the bitter waters, and if she was in fact treacherous, she dies in the *Bais HaMikdash*.

Rashi explains that the Torah puts the laws of the *nazir* next to the laws of the *sotah* to teach us that anyone who witnesses this scene should take a vow of abstinence from wine because wine brings a person to these types of sins.

ספר במדבר פרק ו

(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי יִפְלֵא לְנָדָר נָדָר נָזִיר לְהִזְיֵר לַיהוָה:

Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, "A man or woman who sets himself apart by making a Nazirite vow to abstain for the sake of the Lord."

רש"י על במדבר פרק ו פסוק ב

(ב) כִּי יִפְלֵא - יִפְרִישׁ. למה נסמכה פרשת נזיר לפ' סוטה לומר לך שכל הרואה סוטה בקלקולה יזיר עצמו מן היין שהוא מביא לידי ניאוף (סוטה):

Why was the parsha of nazir placed next to the parsha of sotah? To teach us that anyone who sees a sotah in her ruination should separate himself from wine, which brings him to iniquity.

Questions

If wine will lead a person to transgression, then why should a person abstain from it only if he sees a woman go through this drama? And if wine isn't necessarily dangerous, then why should he abstain just because this particular woman suffered a downfall because of wine?

Either wine is dangerous and should be avoided, or it isn't and can be used prudently. Why does the fact that someone happened to see a woman destroy her life change his relationship to wine?