

Rashi cites the Gemara (סוטה ב.) that asks why was the topic of Nazir juxtaposed to the topic of Sotah? The Gemara answers to teach us that one who sees a Sotah in her debasement should separate from wine, as wine was a likely ingredient in the downfall of the Sotah and the destruction of her marriage. We have a rule that says in the first 4 books of the Pentateuch אין דורשין סמוכים, we do not derive any special meaning or connection between topics that are juxtaposed. In the Book of Deuteronomy we do derive special laws and meaning from the juxtaposition of two topics. For example, in פרשת כי תצא we derive that one who appoints an unworthy judge is tantamount to planting an Ashairah tree next to the altar in the Temple. Rashi quotes the Midrash noting the juxtaposition of the story of מריבה to מלחמת עמלק. Why note the juxtaposition of the stories if we do not derive anything from it?

The Torah is a book of laws communicated by Gd to the Jewish People. It contains the 613 Commandments by which the Jew lives his life. However the Torah is more than a book of laws. It provides a blueprint and roadmap as to **how** we are to act. There are appropriate and inappropriate ways to respond to situations we encounter. Even though the strict letter of the law may not require action or response on our part, the Torah tells us that we need to look beneath the surface and understand the complexities of the situation. Is the situation at hand something that is private, an isolated one-off? Or is it something that is likely to impact others, perhaps the entire community in a negative way? In order to preclude that possibility that society will be infected, we must take the initiative to confront it and stop it.

When the Torah tells us in פרשת בשלה about the juxtaposition of the stories mentioned above, it is teaching us that there is a proper way to act and request from Gd as well as an improper way. The Jew must be careful in how he acts lest his actions be interpreted as a rebellion against Gd. As the Torah tells us, the people were testing Gd to see if He was truly in their midst. Because of that, they were punished with the Amalek attack and its aftermath. The goal was to teach them a lesson that they should never again repeat the mistake of questioning Gd's omnipresence.

The story of the Nazir and the Sotah is similar to that of Amalek. While there is no commandment requiring one to separate from wine when he encounters a Sotah, the Torah is telling us to look in the mirror. Take stock of this catastrophe and understand the root cause. Often it is frivolity and lax behavior that starts with the innocent drinking of a cup of wine that can culminate with tragic ramifications. Look below the surface to see the underlying causes and change your behavior so this situation does not repeat itself. Moral breakdown and decay in society can lead to the unraveling of civilized life. Unfortunately, we don't have to look far to see the depths man and society can sink to. By juxtaposing these topics, the Torah is giving us important direction to reflect on and analyze our sins, and place reminders and roadblocks to prevent them from recurring.

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