

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Seizing the Moment...

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GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

WHEN CHAZAL LOOKED AT THE PLACEMENTS OF the topics discussed in this week's Parasha, they made a fascinating observation. The two seemingly incongruous topics of the *nazir* and *sotah* are juxtaposed, leading *Chazal* in the gemara Sotah (2a) to say that the reason for these two topics' juxtaposition is to tell us that one who sees a *sotah* in her [state of] humiliation should separate himself from wine.

Let us understand the message that *Chazal* are telling us. A woman who was suspected of infidelity with an individual, after being warned by her husband not to seclude herself with him, had to go through a whole process in order to prove her innocence. She had to bring a special offering of plain barley (which is considered animal food), was schlepped all over the *Beis Hamikdash*, had to publicly deny the accusations against her, and had to drink a mixture of water and dirt into which Hashem's Name was erased. If she was indeed guilty of infidelity, her thigh and stomach would become bloated until both she and the adulterer would literally explode. Observers watching

these events unfold would most likely be so moved that they would try to ensure that they themselves would never come to the state of being suspected of infidelity in order to avoid such a fate.

If we would think about what we would do, we might say "I will be more cognizant of ensuring that there is more of a separation between myself and the opposite gender" or "I will try not to speak frivolously with other people." However, *Chazal* understood through the juxtaposition of these topics the real way an individual should seize this moment of inspiration to make a change that will make a real difference. *Chazal* told us that in order to prevent a situation such as the *sotah*, we must look at the little steps in the beginning that led to this disgraceful state of affairs. This whole episode started with a person's day-to-day habits. If a person drinks a little more wine than he should, even if alone and totally within the realm of permissibility, this will lead to drinking more, and then to

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GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

ELIZA AND RACHEL WERE TWO SISTERS WHO WERE a year apart and were of marriageable age. Rosh Hashana came and they walked to shul together. One was carrying a bag with what she thought were *machzorim* inside for both of them. When they got to shul and looked inside, they realized that they had only brought one. Deciding to share the one they had brought, they found seats and began to daven. After some time, they felt a tap on their shoulder. Behind them was an indignant woman standing over them.

"What chutzpah! You've done nothing but talk to each other since you walked into shul!" The woman had obviously not noticed that they were in fact sharing a *machzor*. Feeling quite embarrassed, the girls returned to their davening. After the davening finished, one turned to the other. "Our sages tell us that those who are shamed and don't answer find favor in the eyes of Hashem. Let's take this chance to daven that we find our husbands soon." And as a matter of fact, they did. 📖

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER
FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM
BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

A noted lecturer had a steady class which he delivered to non-observant Jews who did not adhere to the laws of Shabbos. At one class, one of the frequent attendees arrived with a bottle of wine, informed everyone that his wife just gave birth to a girl and wanted to drink a *L'chaim* with everyone.

The lecturer did not know what to do; this man was starting to become more observant, however, he is still seen publicly not observing Shabbos. Halacha rules that such a person's wine is forbidden to drink. On the other hand, if he were not to partake of the wine, the man will probably be very insulted, and may stop attending the class. In addition, all his advances in his religious observance may end.

Q May he drink the wine?

A The *Beis Yosef* (Y"D; 119) quotes the *Rashba* who indeed rules that the wine of a Jew who publicly desecrates the Shabbos is treated as *yayin nesech*, wine used for idolatrous libations,

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

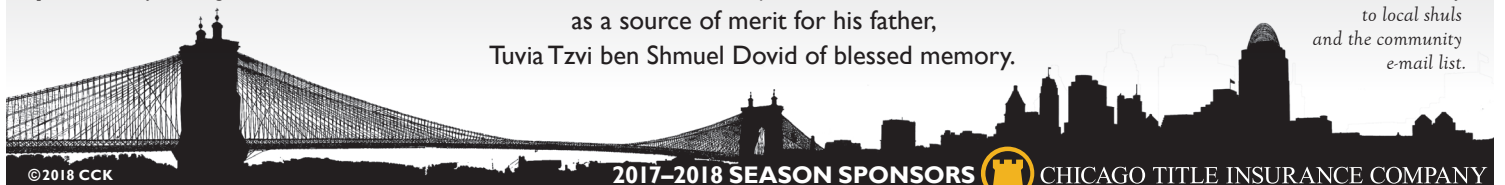
Where in our parasha do we find a reference to music?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 📖

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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and is forbidden. However, the Sdei Chemed brings dissenting opinions that the Rashba just means to say that this Jew isn't trusted to say that the wine wasn't used for idolatrous purposes; not that we treat it like *yayin nesech*.

There are also those who believe that nowadays, there is room to be more lenient with Shabbos violators, either because they grew up unaware of the matter without being censured properly, or because it may be better to bring them close, and not cause them to become more distant with their observance.

When this question was presented to Rav Elyashiv, ztz"l, he said that despite all that was just mentioned, he would nonetheless advise the lecturer to attempt to avoid drinking. If he sees that this course of action won't work, and the man will be embarrassed, he should take no more than a small sip. 🍷

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Seizing the Moment CONTINUED

drinking with friends, and then to drinking with strangers, leading to more interactions with others, until reaching the point where one could be suspected of infidelity. *Chazal* therefore told us that the way to truly make an impact on our lives is to take a look at day-to-day habits and contemplate what they might turn into. In the case of *so-*

tah, this translates into taking a break from

drinking wine altogether. Nobody knows us better than ourselves, which means that we are the best individuals to look at our lives and understand how to rectify issues by starting at the beginning. Using this *Chazal* as our guide, we can take our inspiration and truly seize the moment to do better, live better, and be better! 🍷



TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In May of 5701 (1941), Cincinnati Samuel Schmidt was sent on a mission by Rabbi Eliezer Silver and the Vaad Hatzalah to South America to the countries of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. His goal was to secure entry visas to these countries to allow a place to go for the more than 2,000 refugees that had fled Lithuania to Japan, as the Japanese had no intention of allowing them to stay. All those who could not find a place to immigrate were at a high risk of being returned to the Soviet Union, where the practice of Judaism was severely condemned. This trip was made necessary because of the unwillingness of the U.S. to allow so many Jewish refugees into America and the refusal of the British to allow them into Palestine. Schmidt's efforts were partially successful in that Paraguay agreed to issue some of the necessary visas, but using the country as a haven never came about. A significant number of refugees instead went to Shanghai, China. 🍷

SOURCE: ZUROFF, EFRAIM (1997). "RESCUE VIA THE FAR EAST: THE ATTEMPT TO SAVE POLISH RABBIS AND YESHIVAH STUDENTS, 1939-41. SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER ONLINE, ANNUAL 1: CHAPTER 8. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://MOTLC.WIESENTHAL.COM/SITE/](http://MOTLC.WIESENTHAL.COM/SITE/)

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