



# Likkutei Sichos

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\*and Siyum of Tractate Sotah

## The Culmination of Sotah — Fear of Sin

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## 1.

### WHAT IS THE ORDER?

Our Sages say,<sup>1</sup> “Why is the *parshah*<sup>2</sup> of the *nazir*<sup>3</sup> juxtaposed with the section of the *sotah*?<sup>4</sup> To teach you that a person who sees a *sotah*’s debasement should abstain from wine.”<sup>5</sup> For this same reason, these subjects are also juxtaposed in the Oral Law — tractate *Sotah* follows immediately after tractate *Nazir*. As the Talmud states at the beginning of tractate *Sotah*: “The *Tanna* has just concluded {teaching about} the *nazir*; why does he go on to {teach about} the *sotah*? This is in accordance with *Rebbi* {who says} ... why is the section of the *nazir* juxtaposed to the section of the *sotah*? ... A person who sees a *sotah*’s debasement should abstain, etc.”

The Rambam,<sup>6</sup> however, orders the tractates differently: He places *Sotah* immediately after ***Gittin*** (while placing tractate *Nazir* before tractate *Gittin*) because “the subject (comprising tractate *Sotah*) is connected to the subject of divorce. A husband and wife are obligated to divorce if the wife had committed adultery.

[This does not conflict with the (above-mentioned) Talmudic passage: “The *Tanna* has just concluded {teaching about} the *nazir*; why does he continue with {teaching about} the *sotah*?... A person who sees the *Sotah*...

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<sup>1</sup> *Sotah* 2a.

<sup>2</sup> {The term *parshah* here refers to a section from the weekly Torah portion, dealing with a particular topic.}

<sup>3</sup> {This refers to a person who abstains from drinking wine, cutting his hair, and becoming ritually impure.}

<sup>4</sup> {A *sotah* is a woman who secluded herself with a suspected adulterer although her husband warned her not to do so. If she wished to remain married to her husband, she would be brought to the Temple and given “bitter waters” to drink. This would lead to her demise (and the demise of her consort) if she was indeed guilty of adultery, but would bring great blessings for her if she was innocent. The *sotah* is discussed at length in *Bamidbar* 5:11-31. The laws of the *sotah* are recorded in tractate *Sotah*, and codified by Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah*, “Laws of Sotah.” For further elucidation, see the following article: [https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/4067054/jewish/Sotah-The-Biblical-Wayward-Wife.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4067054/jewish/Sotah-The-Biblical-Wayward-Wife.htm)}

<sup>5</sup> *Berachos* 63a.

<sup>6</sup> {Rabbi *Moshe ben Maimon*, author of the *Mishneh Torah*, is one of the most esteemed decisors of Jewish law.}

should abstain, etc. (As *Meiri*<sup>7</sup> explains,) this is because “*Gittin* and *Sotah* are **identical** in this respect; the cause of the divorce is due to the {woman’s} *debasement*... the tractates of *Gittin* and *Sotah* are juxtaposed to teach that the debasement which results from drinking wine leads to “*Gittin*” {divorce} and “*Sotah*” {a woman becoming a suspected adulteress}.”]

We need to clarify: Since in Scripture, the two *parshiyos* of *nazir* and *sotah* are **directly** juxtaposed, why is there another tractate intervening in the Oral Torah (where the juxtaposition of tractate *Nazir* to (tractate *Gittin* and) tractate *Sotah* is for the very **same** reason as in Scripture)?

Another difficulty: What is the reasoning behind the dispute whether tractate *Sotah* immediately follows tractate *Nazir* (as Rashi explains, and as a straightforward reading of the talmudic text suggests) or whether it follows tractate *Gittin* (as Rambam explains)?

## 2.

DISCRETIONARY OR OBLIGATORY?

Some commentaries explain that Rambam follows the opinion of the *Jerusalem Talmud* which maintains that the *kinui*<sup>8</sup> is dependent on {a dispute as to why a husband may} divorce {his wife}. (Therefore, Rambam maintains that tractate *Sotah* follows tractate *Gittin*.)

The *Jerusalem Talmud*<sup>9</sup> says: The dispute between Rabbi Li’ezer and Rabbi Yehoshua as to whether formally cautioning one’s wife is obligatory or discretionary is based on the dispute between Beis Hillel with Beis Shammai (in the *Mishnah* at the **conclusion** of *Gittin*<sup>10</sup>) as to whether (according to Beis Shammai) “a man should not divorce his wife unless he

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<sup>7</sup> {*Menachem ben Solomon Meiri*, 1249-1310, A commentator on the Talmud.}

<sup>8</sup> {The warning a husband gives his wife not to be secluded with another man. This is a prerequisite to the *sotah* process.}

<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of tractate *Sotah*.

<sup>10</sup> {*Gittin* 90a.}

discovers a shameful matter concerning her” or (according to Beis Hillel) a man may choose to divorce his wife “even if she burned his food”:

In a case where “one finds an indecent matter” where there are no witnesses,<sup>11</sup> according to Beis Shammai — “He shouldn’t divorce her, because he did not find that she had done something shameful. But he is unable to remain with her, since he has found an indecent matter {albeit inconclusively}.” He is therefore obligated to formally caution her in order to determine whether she is actually engaging in shameful behavior. According to Beis Hillel, however (who maintain that one may divorce his wife even if “she burns his food”), *kinui* is discretionary, because a husband is permitted to divorce his wife {regardless}.

*Tosfos* quotes the *Jerusalem Talmud* and asks: According to the *Jerusalem Talmud*, since the subject of *kinui* is dependent on {a factor pertaining to} divorce, tractate *Sotah* should immediately follow tractate *Gittin*. The above-mentioned commentators explain that according to the *Jerusalem Talmud*, this is in fact the case: *Sotah* does immediately follow *Gittin*, and Rambam concurs with the opinion of the *Jerusalem Talmud*.

This resolution is problematic: The *Babylonian Talmud* **does not** make {the obligatory or discretionary nature of} *kinui* contingent upon {the rabbinic sanction to} divorce.

— This is also<sup>12</sup> evidenced by the *Babylonian Talmud*’s discussion whether *kinui* is obligatory or discretionary. There, however, the disagreement is between Rabbi *Akiva* (who maintains that *kinui* is obligatory) and Rabbi *Yishmael* (who maintains that it is discretionary). Nonetheless, Rabbi *Akiva* also expresses the opinion<sup>13</sup> that one may divorce his wife, “even if he has found another woman whom he prefers.” —

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<sup>11</sup> Because if there are witnesses to her indecent behavior, this constitutes sufficient grounds to warrant the husband divorcing his wife, even according to *Beis Shammai*.

<sup>12</sup> Aside from the fact that the above distinction is not mentioned anywhere in the *Babylonian Talmud*.

<sup>13</sup> {*Gittin* 90a. The same *Mishnah* that quotes the above-mentioned opinions of Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai.}

This indicates that according to the *Babylonian Talmud*, *Sotah* is **not** a {thematic} continuation of (the end of) *Gittin*. Consequently, *Sotah* (as a **straightforward** understanding of the *Talmud* suggests) follows immediately after *Nazir*. Accordingly, how can Rambam follow the opinion of the *Jerusalem Talmud* over the *Babylonian Talmud*?<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore: If Rambam follows the opinion of the *Jerusalem Talmud* (that the obligation of *kinui* is contingent upon {the ability to} divorce), how can he conclude (as Rabbi Akiva maintains) that *kinui* is an **obligation**, which, according to the above-mentioned passage in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, is the opinion of **Beis Shammai**?<sup>15</sup>

### 3.

#### ATTEMPTED ANSWER

We will resolve these difficulties by prefacing with an explanation of Rambam's position regarding *kinui* being an obligation, as Rabbi Akiva maintains. Seemingly: The {*Babylonian*} *Talmud*<sup>16</sup> infers from the wording of the *Mishnah* in *Sotah*, “a person who warns (his wife),” that “this is only after the fact,<sup>17</sup> but ideally,<sup>18</sup> a person should not do so. The author of our *Mishnah* maintains that it is forbidden to warn one's wife.” Since, according to this “unattributed *Mishnah*,”<sup>19</sup> “it is forbidden to warn one's wife,” why does the Rambam rule according to Rabbi Akiva's opinion, which is only taught in a *Beraisa*?<sup>20</sup> The rule is,<sup>21</sup> “When an anonymous *Mishnah* differs from a *Beraisa*..., the *halachah* follows the anonymous *Mishnah*”!

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<sup>14</sup> {The general rule is that in a case of a dispute between the *Babylonian Talmud* and the *Jerusalem Talmud*, the position of the former prevails..}

<sup>15</sup> {The general rule is that we maintain the position of Beis Hillel over Beis Shammai when they differ.}

<sup>16</sup> *Sotah* 2a.

<sup>17</sup> {“*Diavad*” in the Aramaic original, meaning, “if it was already done.”}

<sup>18</sup> {“*Lechatchilah*” in the Aramaic original.}

<sup>19</sup> {*Stam Mishnah* in the original Hebrew. The general rule is that the *halachah* is decided in favor of the position advanced in an anonymous *Mishnah*.}

<sup>20</sup> {A *Beraisa* is teaching of a *Tanna* that was not included in the *Mishnah*. It does not carry the same *halachic* weight as a *Mishnah*. Hence, we generally maintain the position of a *Mishnah* over a *Beraisa*.}

<sup>21</sup> *Yevamos* 42b.

*Tosfos Yom Tov*<sup>22</sup> explains:<sup>23</sup> Since both Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yishmael (in the *Beraisa*) agree that “*kinui* is not forbidden, the *halachah* does not follow the opinion of the *Mishnah*. We must therefore apply the rule, “the *halachah* follows the opinion of Rabbi *Akiva* over his contemporaries.”

This explanation, however, can only be made according to those who maintain that the principle that “the *halachah* follows an anonymous *Mishnah*” over a *Beraisa* does not apply when the anonymous *Mishnah* reflects a minority opinion.<sup>24</sup> According to the opinions however, that “the *halachah* follows an anonymous *Mishnah*” also applies in such a case {even when the anonymous *Mishnah* represents a minority opinion}, this difficulty remains unresolved.

#### 4.

##### TWO REASONS TO WARN

We can posit that according to Rambam, there is not a three-way dispute regarding *kinui* (forbidden, discretionary, or obligatory) because Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva — in the *Beraisa* — do not dispute the author of the *Mishnah* that, “it is forbidden to warn one’s wife.”

[We can similarly conclude this from the order of the Talmud. The Talmud does not present this *Beraisa* **immediately** after the Talmud infers {from the wording of the *Mishnah*} that, “The author of our *Mishnah* maintains that it is forbidden to warn one’s wife.” This is in line with the *Talmud’s* statement regarding the opinions of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua in the *Mishnah*, “*kinui* is done in the presence of two witnesses”: “This *Mishnah* does not follow the opinion of the *Tanna*... Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Yehudah... {that} one who issues a warning to his wife, issues a warning based on one witness or based on himself.” The *Talmud* does not

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<sup>22</sup> {Heller, R. Yomtov Lipman: 1579-1654; Prague and Vienna; author of *Tosfos Yom Tov* commentary on the *Mishnah* and *Lechem Chamudot* commentary on *Mishneh Torah*.}

<sup>23</sup> *Tosfos Yom Tov*, “*Sotah* 2:1” {s.v. “*HaMekaneh LeIshto*}.

<sup>24</sup> {“*Daas yachid*,” in the Hebrew original, literally, “the opinion of an individual.”}

quote the *Beraisa*, even in connection to the opinion of the author of our *Mishnah* that “it is forbidden to issue a warning!”

The *Beraisa* is only brought in the *Talmud* as a proof that *Bei Rabbi Yishmael's* teaching<sup>25</sup> that “one does not issue a warning to his wife unless a spirit enters him” refers to a “spirit of purity.”<sup>26</sup> (For if we understood this to be a “spirit of impurity,” how could a person be allowed, or required, to introduce a “spirit of impurity” into himself?)]

Rather, the *Mishnah* and the *Beraisa* are discussing two **different** situations.

There are two approaches regarding *kinui*:

- a) Warning an immodest woman as a precursor to her seclusion: When (in the words of the above-mentioned passage in the *Jerusalem Talmud*) “one discovers about her an indecent matter” and the husband suspects his wife of sinning, her husband cautions her to ascertain whether she has sinned (if she ignores his warning — and secludes herself) or not.
- b) Warning a modest woman:<sup>27</sup> As Rambam says,<sup>28</sup> *kinui* must be done:

...gently, in a spirit of purity and caution, in order to **guide her... and to remove stumbling blocks**. A person who is unconcerned with {the conduct of} his wife, his children, and the members of his household {and who refrains from} warning them and scrutinizing their ways **at all times...** is himself a sinner.

This demonstrates that the obligation of *kinui* is (not a function of the husband suspecting his wife of sinning, etc., or him having seen “an

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<sup>25</sup> {The *yeshivah* of Rabbi Yishmael.}

<sup>26</sup> {A warning indicates that he will not condone flirtatious behavior.}

<sup>27</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*isha keshaira*,” a decent woman with virtuous character.”}

<sup>28</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “Laws of *Sotah*,” ch. 4, par. 19.

unseemly matter,” etc.. Rather, it is) a detail in the general obligation to **guide one’s wife** [just as one is generally obligated to guide (and be concerned with the behavior of) his children and his household.]

This is the reasoning that “our Sages commanded the Jewish people to **warn their wives**,”<sup>29</sup> generally, and every woman in particular, as a consistent mode of conduct. [Only with the following provisoes— “he may not warn her too often”; “in a spirit of levity... nor with the purpose of instilling fear.... It is not proper for a man to rush immediately and issue a warning in the presence of witnesses.”]

## 5.

### THE EXPLANATION

This is the difference between the *Mishnah* and the *Beraisa*:

The *Mishnah* (which says, “a person who issues a warning” — {implying} “only after the fact,”<sup>30</sup>) refers to warning a woman “in whom one discovers an indecent matter” or the like (which may be a prelude to her secluding herself). In **this case**, Rambam maintains that according to the *Babylonian Talmud*, it is “forbidden to issue a warning” (as will be explained in section 6).

The dispute in the *Beraisa* between Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva (whether *kinui* is obligatory or discretionary), however, is in reference to a **modest** woman — “to guide her.”

Rabbi Yishmael maintains that the entire idea of *kinui* (even as it pertains to a modest woman) is discretionary — it is a **novelty** and a **dispensation**: In spite of the commandment,<sup>31</sup> “You shall not hate your brother in your heart,” the Torah advises a person in this situation that

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<sup>29</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sotah*,” ch. 4, par. 18-19; “*Hilchos Ishus*,” ch. 15, par. 17.

<sup>30</sup> {“*Diavad*” in the Aramaic original, meaning, “if it was already done.”}

<sup>31</sup> *Vayikra* 19:17.



warning his wife is acceptable (despite the possibility that this warning could stir up strife or hatred).

Rabbi Akiva maintains that the *kinui* that is done “to guide her” is an **obligation**.

The Rambam rules accordingly, as mentioned above (where he is specifically talking about **this manner** of *kinui*, as apparent from his wording, mentioned above in section 4).

[We can suggest further: These two approaches to *kinui* are hinted at in the verse:<sup>32</sup> “A desire to warn {her} had come upon him and he had warned his wife and she had become **defiled**, **or** a desire to warn {her} had come upon him and he had warned his wife, and she had **not** become defiled.” This lengthy, repetitive wording (“or, a desire to warn {her} had come upon him and he warned his wife”) hints that the verse refers to two **types** of women: “He had warned his wife and she had become **defiled**” — {this refers to} the warning to a woman “in whom one discovers an indecent matter” or the like (it is more likely that “she had become defiled”); or, “he had warned his wife, and she had not become defiled” — {this refers to} the warning to a modest woman, “to guide her.”]

## 6.

### IT IS FORBIDDEN TO WARN

Why would it be forbidden to issue a warning to one’s wife “in whom he discovers an indecent matter” or the like? Seemingly, the **opposite** should be the case — in such a case, a person should certainly warn his wife (despite the possibility that the warning could cause strife, etc.) in order to prevent her from sinning (in the future), and to ascertain if she in fact had sinned!

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<sup>32</sup> *Bamidbar* 5:14.

We can suggest that according to Rambam, the reason that “it is forbidden to issue a warning” is (not as Rashi says,<sup>33</sup> because warning her can cause strife, but rather) because in such a case (when “he discovers in her an indecent matter” or the like), there is concern that the *sotah* waters will not ascertain whether she sinned, etc., as will be explained:

The law is that<sup>34</sup> “when the man is free from sin, the waters test his wife {to determine if she sinned, but if} the man is not free from sin, the waters do not test his wife.” *Not free from sin* refers to (in the wording of the Rambam)<sup>35</sup> “a man who engaged in forbidden relations from the time he reached adulthood and onward” (including “sinning with an unmarried woman”).<sup>36</sup>

The Talmud says,<sup>37</sup> “Any man who is unfaithful to his wife, his wife is unfaithful to him.... For people say, ‘He is with the *karei* and she is with the *butzinei*’” (a **single** species {of vegetables}, one is larger and the other, smaller. In other words, she is involved in the same thing that he is — Rashi.) On this basis, when a woman displays inappropriate conduct, there is greater likelihood that her husband’s conduct has also been inappropriate. Consequently, the waters will not evaluate her.

The author of our *Mishnah* says that in such a case, “it is forbidden to warn her” due to the concern that the waters will in any event not be effective in testing her. And so giving her these waters to drink, will lead to (in the words of Rambam)<sup>38</sup> “a transgression, for he causes Hashem’s ineffable name to be erased..., and brings the effectiveness of the *sotah* waters into disrepute.

Rather, it is preferable to divorce her.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Sotah* 2a.

<sup>34</sup> *Sotah* 28a.

<sup>35</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sotah*,” ch. 2, par. 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Sotah* 28a.

<sup>37</sup> *Sotah* 10a.

<sup>38</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sotah*,” ch. 3, par. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Although we do not **compel** him to divorce her. See *Sotah* 25a; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Ishus*,” ch. 24, par. 16; *Yevamos* 63b; *Gittin*, end; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Gerushin*,” ch. 10, par. 22.

## ORDER OF THE TRACTATES

In light of the above, we can understand why Rambam maintains that tractate *Sotah* follows tractate *Gittin*:

Since the ***Mishnah*** at the **beginning** of *Sotah* discusses a woman in whom “one discovers indecent matters” — a sinful *sotah* — it is reasonable that the clause, “A person who sees a *sotah*’s **debasement**” (the reason for juxtaposing *Sotah* to *Nazir* — ) is to be understood (not as Rashi explains,<sup>40</sup> “in her disgrace and shame,” but rather) according to its **simple** meaning: The debasement of a **sinful** *sotah* — her depravity by having sinned, or her punishment {evincing her debasement} — “her stomach shall be distended.”<sup>41</sup>

Being that the (entire) debasement of a sinful *sotah* (in our times) is that “A husband and wife are obligated to divorce,”<sup>42</sup> Rambam maintains that *Sotah* follows *Gittin* (because regarding the issue of **debasement**, *Sotah* and *Gittin* “are identical,” as mentioned above in section 1).

[This concept — that the introductory *Mishnah* to tractate *Sotah* speaks regarding a sinful *Sotah* — also accords with the order of the verses in the ***parshah*** of the *sotah* in Scripture: The *parshah*<sup>43</sup> **begins**, “Any man whose wife shall go astray and commit treachery against him; a man laid with her... and she became secluded and defiled.” Only afterward the verse speaks regarding a **doubt**, “A desire to warn {her} had come upon him and he had warned his wife and she had become defiled, or... she had not become defiled.” In this verse itself, the clause, “she had become defiled” precedes “she had not become defiled.” (As mentioned above, the first half of the verse (“and he warned... and she had become defiled”))

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<sup>40</sup> Rashi *Sotah* 2a, s.v. “bekilkulah.”

<sup>41</sup> *Bamidbar* 5:27.

<sup>42</sup> Rambam’s *Peirush HaMishnayos*, sec. beg., “The sixth section....”

<sup>43</sup> *Bamidbar* 5:12-14.

speaks regarding a warning issued to a woman, “in whom he discovers an indecent matter.”)]

Rashi, however, follows his own approach regarding the order of the tractates: He understands the *Mishnah* to refer to any warning, even to a woman in whom her husband has not seen any “indecent matter” or the like. Therefore: a) Rashi maintains that *Sotah* follows *Nazir*, because the beginning of tractate *Sotah* is unrelated to tractate *Gittin*. b) Rashi explains that the clause, “A person who sees a *sotah*’s **debasement**, etc.” means, ““in her disgrace and shame.” c) A husband is prohibited from warning his wife because, “Warning brings him to strife and his wife to disgrace, **even if she was innocent.**”<sup>44,45</sup>

## 8.

### THE CULMINATION OF SOTAH

Based on Rambam’s approach — that the beginning of the tractate discusses a sinful *sotah* — we will also understand the connection between the beginning of the tractate and its end,<sup>46</sup> “Do not teach that fear of sin has ceased, for there is me”:

The way to “conclude” {i.e., achieve the finality} of (tractate) *Sotah* — — a time when there will be no be a case of a sinful *sotah*, so its related the laws will no longer actually need to be administered, is by oneself reaching the level where one can declare, “**Do not** teach that fear of sin has ceased, for there **is me.**” Meaning, when a person has truly cultivated and imbued

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<sup>44</sup> {I.e., although having acted inappropriately by disregarding her husband’s warning not to seclude herself with a particular man, she was proven not to have actually been unfaithful.}

<sup>45</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Sotah* 2a, s.v., “*asur lekanos.*”

<sup>46</sup> {The last *mishnah* states that with the passing of Rabbi Yehudah the Prince, no longer was there an exemplar a G-d-fearing person who trembled at the thought of committing a sin. Commenting on this *mishnah*, the *amora* R’ Nachman proposed a revision. He suggested striking this clause from the *mishnah*, since he, R’ Nachman, was still alive, and he was a model of a person who feared sin.}

himself with a “fear of sin” — the existence of and possibility for sin or a *sotah* will be gone.<sup>47</sup>

## 9.

### FEAR OF SIN ITSELF

We can also explain the above connection {between the beginning and end of the tractate} based on Rashi’s approach. The *kinui* mentioned at the beginning of the tractate applies (also) to a modest woman (just as when the *Mishnah* later discusses the seclusion and the drinking of the *sotah* waters, etc., it does not emphasize that we are discussing a sinful *sotah*; rather, this discussion applies “even if she is pure”).<sup>48</sup>

According to the well-known explanation that “fear of sin”<sup>49</sup> implies (not the fear of **punishment** — fear of a sin’s ensuing punishment, but rather,) fear of the **sin itself**, of committing an act that violates Hashem’s will. **This** idea is expressed uniquely by a *sotah* who is {found to be} **pure**:

All sins are assigned a punishment;<sup>50</sup> consequently, it is possible to fear the sin alone {without fearing its associated punishment}, or to fear the {associated} punishment.

The case of a “pure” woman, who was secluded and given to drink, etc., is an exception. Not only does she not receive any punishment; on the contrary, she receives a great reward — “she shall be proven innocent and she shall bear seed.”<sup>51</sup> As our Sages say,<sup>52</sup> “if she gave birth with pain, she

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<sup>47</sup> Note the exposition of our Sages at the beginning of the tractate (*Sotah* 3a), “A person does not **commit a sin**... {unless a spirit of folly enters them}, as it says... ‘she goes astray {*sisteh*}.’” {We see the inherent connection between sin and a *sotah*, as the word *sisteh* is etymologically related to the word *sotah*.}

<sup>48</sup> Rashi s.v. *Ossur*.

<sup>49</sup> *Tosfos Yom Tov*, end *Sotah*; *Likkutei Torah*, “*Korach*,” 52d, *Mattos* 82a.

<sup>50</sup> See *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” the explanatory note at the end of ch. 24.

<sup>51</sup> *Bamidbar* 5:28.

<sup>52</sup> *Sotah* 61a.

will give birth with ease... if she gave birth to females she will give birth to males, etc.”

Nevertheless, she must bring a *minchah* offering as atonement<sup>53</sup> because of the very fact that she was secluded. Even if her seclusion, *per se*, was **not** forbidden (if not for the *kinui* of her husband),<sup>54</sup> her conduct was still improper.

When a woman secludes herself, even if she does so in hopes of receiving the reward described in the verse, “and she will retain seed” — this indicates that she lacks a fear of **sin**.

Therefore, the ending and the “finality” of (tractate) *Sotah* is (achieved when a person attains fear of sin, as expressed in the statement), “Do not teach that fear of **sin has ceased, for there is me.**”

— From a talk delivered on *Erev Shavuos*, 5719 (1959)

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<sup>53</sup> See *Tosfos*, “*Sotah* 23a,” s.v. “*kol*,” “*hakometz*”; see also *Kerisos* 24a regarding the dispute as to whether a *sotah*’s sacrifice is brought for atonement, or to “clarify the sin” of the *sotah*. (See *Tosfos*, *Sotah* 22b, s.v. “*keshebaalah*.”) We may posit that even according to the opinion that her sacrifice “clarifies the sin,” it does so only with respect to her husband’s portion of the sacrifice (see *Tosfos* cited earlier in this note); with regards to the husband, the sin needs to be “clarified”; in contrast, with regards to the wife (who know whether or not she has sinned), her sacrifices provides atonement exclusively.

<sup>54</sup> Such as seclusion with her father, or while her husband was in town. {In such cases, the only prohibition she transgressed was secluding herself with a person regarding whom her husband warned her.} See *Tafnas Paaneach*, “*Hilchos Sotah*,” ch. 1, *halachah* 7, in an addendum; and **other** sources.