

...from the future world for every earthly blessing placed at his disposal, and which he had neglected to enjoy."

The Biblical code of laws relating to the Nazirite, as set forth in the sixth chapter of the Book of Numbers, is understood to be a series of regulations of voluntary duties on the part of any man or woman in Israel—the assumption of which being in no way obligatory. Its purpose, rather than anything else—was training in the fulfillment of personal vows, or a carrying out of promises. Three duties are thus prescribed for the Nazirite in the said section, viz: The abstention from wine and strong drink; the growing of the hair in unshorn state, and the keeping from a dead body. The Nazirite is termed "Holy unto the Lord," inasmuch as one may devote his person, or any of his earthly possessions, and declare the same to be "holy unto the Lord." (Lev. xxvii.) In such manner also the first born of both man and beast were "holy unto the Lord." (Exodus, xiii; Numbers, iii.)

The hypothetical supposition that the Nazirite was placed in a category with the priests is not quite correct. There are such pronounced divergencies as to make this parallel incongruous. In reference to the Nazirite it is said: "If either man or woman will pronounce a vow as a Nazirite." (Numbers vi, 2.) There may have been women Nazirites, as there are some names of women prophets mentioned in Holy Scriptures; yet there was absolutely no likelihood for a woman priest, or priestess, in Israel. Another striking divergence is in that the Nazirite was to abstain from wine on the strength of his own vow, while from the plain statement of the Biblical text (Lev. x, 9) it appears that the priests were saved only on their "entering the sanctuary to minister in the holiness."

There is but one single instance in the whole of the Old Testament wherein Nazirites are mentioned as a special caste (Amos ii, 11, 12); yet it is perfectly evident that the prophet there refers to a special class from among the young people, who were possessed of a bolder character. They took upon themselves the vow to abstain from drinking wine, in order to counteract the excesses of drink, and other evils that were prevalent in the Kingdom of Israel. And yet, with all this it appears that they fell short of their purpose, as they were induced to break this vow. (Ibid.) There is hardly a single instance recorded in the Bible with any man of worth or prominence in whom all three restrictions of a Nazirite should be literally fulfilled.

CASES OF SAMSON AND SAMUEL.

The two solitary cases of pre-ordained Naziritism are Samson the Strong and Samuel the prophet. Samson is spoken of as a "Nazirite of God from the womb," in that no razor was to pass over his head (Judges xii, 5; xvi, 17). But aside from the observance enjoined upon his mother during pregnancy, the Bible makes no mention of his own abstaining from wine. On the contrary, the statement that he had arranged and attended the customary drinking bouts for seven days (Ibid. xiv, 10) is sufficient evidence that he had not abstained from wine. It is asserted in the Talmud (Tract. Nazir, page 4) that Samson could not possibly have carried out all three restrictions incumbent upon a Nazirite. The question is also urged (page 11) as to whether or not one may become a Nazirite in the fulfillment of the two other restrictions with the exclusion of drinking wine.

Samuel the prophet was "given to the Lord all the days of his life," and "no razor was to come upon his head" (I Samuel i, 11); yet there is nothing in his eventual career to indicate that he was to abstain from wine or strong drink. And his attendance at a public festivity, as recorded in the ninth chapter of I Samuel, shows conclusively that he, too, participated in the festivity, which among the Israelites of ancient times, had never occurred without wine. (See Jewish Encyclopaedia.)

Tradition also ascribes Naziritism to Absalom, the son of David, who was peculiarly noted for his unshorn locks. He had the hair of his head shaven but once a year (I Samuel, xiv, 26; Talmud, Nazir, 4); and he, too, is never spoken of as an abstainer from wine.

UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW.

Drinking wine was prohibited under the Mosaic law to the priests during workshop; to the Nazirite during the period of his Naziriteness which, if unspecified, implied thirty days (Nazir, 5), and for all Israelites on occasion of mourning or penitence (Daniel x, 3; Zachariah, vii, 3), as in vogue among the most of the Jewish communities even to the present day—and when according to "Chulchan-Arch" *lymdupldmsru et Aruch* no weddings, festivities or rejoicings of any kind are permitted to be held.

Barring these instances "Naziritism," or "total abstinence," was never encouraged to the Jewish faith and Biblical teaching.

In post-Biblical times, and during the exile, Naziritism began to show its signs and spread among the masses, by reason of the mixture of Hellenian philosophies, and it was then that the rabbis, perceiving the grave danger arising therefrom to the public weal and even the public morals, did their best to suppress all practices of self-abnegation and abnormality.

The Order of Reachabites, and users professing "total abstinence," usually base their teaching upon the 35th chapter of Jeremiah, which is merely descriptive of a particular instance intended to demonstrate the virtue of obedience to paternal will, and is in no way proof of abstinence as a religious duty. The prophet herein points to the Rechabite family, known as the Kenites, descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses (see Judges i, 16; iv, 11; I Samuel x, 6; I Chron. ii, 55) as an example of true obedience and steadfastness; since they for many generations followed the rule of Jonadab, son of Rechab, the head of the clan, who charged them and their posterity to "drink no wine, build no house, sow no seed, and plant no vineyard"—all of which would imply to oppose civilization and maintain the Mosaic ideal. Rabbi David Sachs, in the *Blur Commentary*, finds a reason for these prohibitions in the following words of the text: But in tents ye shall dwell all your days, in order that ye may live many days on the face of the land where ye may so-

...of a so-called nation." He quotes before the German writer, who writes of the children of Naboth (John's first born) abiding in the Arabian desert, that they built no houses for themselves, planted no vineyards, and sowed no seeds, nor drank any wine; and that the infringement upon any of these restrictive laws among the tribes were punishable by death.

Upon the Rechabite story nearly all total abstainers of the present day base their theories; and yet, as stated, there is absolutely nothing in this or any other lesson in the Bible to prove the virtue or moral excellence of total abstinence.

THE WINE OF ANCIENT DAYS.

The assertion is often made by the advocates of prohibition that in Bible times there was a distinction known between intoxicating wine and a sort of fermented wine, which latter, as they aver, was in use among the worthy and respectable, for sacred purposes; the one being known as "Yayin" and the other as "Thirosh." This flimsy argument, however, is entirely without foundation, as "Yayin" (ordinary old wine) and "Thirosh" (vintage, first year's wine) are used in the Bible synonymously, and both were known to be intoxicating. (See the Hebrew Bible, the rabbinical lore of Midrashic literature to indicate any such distinction—Christian assertions notwithstanding.)

It should be noted that the term "mishta," generally translated "feast," or banquet, which occurs in the Bible so often in a good sense, and a few times also in a disparaging sense, originally denotes "a drinking" (from "shothoh," to drink), and, according to the sages, "the feast is so termed from the principal feature thereof, which is the drinking."

The use of wine is almost as old as the world itself. Immediately after the flood, and with the first permission of the use of animal flesh, the vineyard was introduced to mankind. "And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard." (Gen. ix, 20.)

Emerging from diluvian destruction, Noah betook himself to the cultivation of the soil for the benefit of posterity, who, according to divine assurance, were "not to be cut off any more by waters of the flood." Noah then became the founder of civilization. Out of the woeful waste he was determined to form a "Garden of the Lord," abounding with charming scenes of gorgeous foliage and vegetation, rich green fields, and graceful olive groves and vineyards bearing their luscious fruit. The famous Jewish savant, Naptali Hartwig Wessely (N. Hertz Wessely), in his excellent work, "Imre Schefer," advances the opinion that in all civilization the vineyard was first brought into being by Noah, the "righteous man," inasmuch as the laudable product of the vineyard was preferred as a much-needed medium for human consolation. For, by his name and calling, Noah was made the comforter of all the children of Adam "concerning their work and the toil of their hands, because of the ground that the Lord hath cursed." (Gen. v, 29.)

At the same time the lesson was taught by Noah, "the righteous man," who was unaware of the nature of the grape juice, that an inordinate use of this mystic fluid—as of all the good things in existence—will lead to unhappy results, and will entail a curse upon the human kind; as it happened in the case of his own son, Ham; whereas the moderate use of the same was to be regarded everywhere in the history of civilization as a blessing, and not a curse.

From Malki-Zedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem of after-times), who met Abraham with bread and wine, and blessed him in the name of the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth—even to these latest ages—wine had followed civilization, and proved itself a most potent factor in every line of social and commercial intercourse amidst the nations of the earth. It is a remarkable fact that the most active and enterprising, virile and enduring races are those who have grown and drunk wine.

The wise men of the Talmud had an exceedingly high estimate of the healing and nourishing qualities of the wine, as may be seen from the following Talmudic passages: "Above all cures administer wine" (*Baba-Bathra*, 58). "In places where there is no wine disease is prevalent." (Ibid.) "Drinking" is especially recommended by the Talmudists for people past middle age. (Sabbath, 152.) Old wine offers a cheering consolation of elderly men of learning, inasmuch as it is the only beverage in existence that improves with age (Midrash).


SAVED THE JEW FROM INEBRIETY.

I believe that the practice of "rejoicing before the Lord" and the timely drinking in friendly society of brethren in faith, and in the presence of the family circle has for centuries past saved the Jews from the evils of inebriety. The slips from the "Cups of Divine Blessing" on the sanctification of the Sabbath and set feasts, administered to all the juvenile members of the Jewish race, in the synagogue and at the home of the faithful—is doubtless the thing that kept these people from the excessive use of alcoholic drink, the sort of inoculation that made them comparatively immune against the common plague which is smiting its thousands.

According to Hebrew teaching, as also in conformity with best reasoning, man's joy cannot be complete without the blessing of the wine. It is a good and pious old custom among Jews on partaking of strong drink in solemn assembly of brethren and friend, to say to one another, "Lechayim!" which means, "For life!" signifying thereby their trust in its cheering and life—and health-preserving properties.

The ancient books speak only of wine and strong drink as they were produced in their days, but which in their effect, good or bad, cannot but have been equal to the alcoholic beverages of our days.

In striving to accomplish our duty as men and moral beings, we must not try to go beyond human nature and the ordinary conditions of human existence. "We must not become over-wise and righteous over-much, in just the same manner as we must not be wicked and foolish over-much." (Ec-



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To stoop before your sceptre and to swear
Allegiance to your lips and eyes and hair;
Beneath your feet what treasures I would fling—
The stars would be your pearls upon a string—
The world a ruby for your finger ring,
And you should have the sun and moon to wear.
If I were King