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stinct: Nazirites and Rechabites. They not only refrained from drinking wine, but from eating any product of the vine.

One reason for this was that the wine was the symbol of a settled life and culture, of towns, cities, and earthly securities. The Nazirites and Rechabites were bearing witness to 'the old days' when the people of God were wanderers in the wilderness, pilgrims on earth with no permanent abode. They were bearing witness to total dependence upon God rather than to dependence upon security derived from the amassing of wealth, the development of real estate holdings, or the inheritance of family property. In addition, High Priests were encouraged to abstain, except from the ritual use of alcohol, because strong drink might hinder the proper execution of their office.

According to Jewish history, then, wine and fruits of the vine are "gifts from God." Coupled with this is the emphasis on "rational control." Finally, "ritual use" of wine, a central focus for Jewish worship in home and synagogue, relates the drinking of wine to that which is sacred. The use of wine in the Old Testament included various sacrifices, religious festivals and funerals, sacred libations at the temples, and offerings of the firstfruits as part of the tithe. In all these instances, wine was used with respect and in moderation. When wine was offered in sacrificial observance, it was always presented with something else (i.e., minerals and oils). All were regarded as gifts from God. It was a sign of homage to God, of thanksgiving and prayer. Even today the three major drinking occasions of the Jewish people are: (1) rites of passage (circumcision, Bar Mitzvah, and marriage); (2) the Sabbath (centered in the family and all its warmth); and (3) holidays and festivals (e.g., Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Chanukah, Purim, and Passover).

Since alcohol releases tension, and since Jewish people have experienced so much tension in persecution and discrimination, "The low rate of Jewish drinking problems becomes all the more striking when one considers the stresses that Jews are apt to experience . . ." At least, a modern Gentile mind would tend to ponder that issue while momentarily considering this phenomenon from perspectives other than religious.

A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Charles R. Snyder has contributed more to the research of Jewish drinking patterns than any other single individual. In the final

13 Chafetz and Demone, Alcoholism and Society, p. 85.