

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

## All Sins Are Created Equal

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי  
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In this week's Parsha, in discussing the episode of Klal Yisrael sinning with the daughters of Moav, the Ralbag derives the following lesson; "This is to let us know that a sin causes another sin. This can be derived from the fact that due to the Zenus, Klal Yisrael came to bow down and sacrifice to Avodah Zarah. Therefore it is appropriate to stay away from a lighter sin just as a severe one, since a lighter sin will lead to a more severe one."

Upon initial analysis, this Ralbag seems puzzling. How can we call the sin of Zenus a lighter sin? Especially in reference to the Dor Deah! However, if we reframe our understanding of the concept of a sin causing another sin, we can begin to understand this Ralbag. The concept is not that once you do one thing bad it will lead you to do a bigger bad thing. Rather, the concept is that in every sin there is a common denominator; one is violating the command of Hashem. In this aspect it makes no difference if it is a big or small sin. Either way you are equally violating the will of Hashem.

From this vantage point the Ralbag is understandable. Once one violated the will of Hashem in a big or small sin, that will lead him to violating the will of Hashem again. Therefore, we need to be extra cautious even by small sins, as they contain the same root cause of violation as a big sin. Through this perspective of evaluating a sin's severity, not on how bad it is, but on the fact that it is violating the Ratzon Hashem, we can begin to be equally cautious in all sins. As it is clear from the Ralbag that granted, there are different punishments for different sins, the root cause of why one sin leads to another, is the fact that one got comfortable with violating the will of Hashem.

### Staying Connected

Another idea that can help us develop greater caution when it comes to sin can be found in another Ralbag. In this week's Parsha the Pasuk says, "Hashem does not see sin in Yaakov, and does not see iniquity in Klal Yisrael, the friendship of the king is with him. The Ralbag comments, "This is to let us know that someone who the Hashgachas Hashem has clung to, behold it will be removed from them when then they turn away from that Hashgacha by doing things that are disgusting, like Aveiros. This is what the Pasuk teaches us.."

Through a careful reading of the Ralbag we can derive the root cause that is disconnecting us from the Hashgacha Hashem. He does not say that it is the sin that causes the removal of the Hashgacha, rather it is the disgustingness of the act of sin. It sounds like the Ralbag is telling us that someone who acted not nice and lowly can't be so connected to Hashem. If we view sin from this perspective that it degrades us, and how can we be connected to Hashem when behaving in this way, it can generate an extra Zehirus in staying away from sin.

It is important to note that although the Ralbag learns the Pasuk, that sin disconnects us from this Hashgacha, the Pasuk also states, "Hashem, his G-d is with him". To which Rashi comments that this means that even when we rebel Hashem is with us, and Rashi and the Ralbag both learn the end of the Pasuk referring to love and friendship. It seems that on the one hand, when we sin we are somewhat disconnected from this high level of Hashgachas Hashem. On the other hand, this love and friendship of Hashem never leaves us.

This idea of how much Hashem loves us can be taken one step further. The Seforno, in discussing the episode of Bilam's donkey, wrote the following, "He gave the donkey power to speak similar to that which we say Hashem opens up our mouth. Hashem did all this to awaken Bilam to Teshuva. This would hopefully cause Bilam to say, Hashem gave speech to one who was not prepared for speech, surely Hashem can take away speech from one prepared to speak. Hashem did all this so someone like Bilam should not be lost."

Bilam was a Rashah who was ready to curse Klal Yisrael for money and honor. Yet the Seforno tells us, for such a Rashah Hashem was willing to change nature to awaken him to Teshuva. We see from here that Hashem doesn't give up on anyone. If Hashem had this attitude towards Bilam Harasha, He surely has this attitude for Klal Yisrael, and would do anything to bring each one of us close to him.