

“He named that place Kivros-Hataavah (the graves of lust) because there they buried the people who had been craving.” (11:34)

Immediately after the people were punished for their needless complaining, they started right up again with a new set of complaints and accusations. This time they slandered the *manna*, which they received daily from Hashem. They claimed they wanted meat – although there was no shortage of meat. They talked about how wonderful Egypt was - in comparison to their misery in the desert. After all was said and done, it amounted to nothing more than an uncontrolled craving. They were overpowered by their *yetzer hara*, evil inclination. The *middah* of *taavah*, craving/lusting for something, can overwhelm a person, so that he loses control over himself. This place stands in infamy as *Kivros Hataavah*, the graves of lust. As *Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, z.l.*, remarks, it was not the burial place of those who lusted. Rather, it was the burial place of lust. This demonstrates and emphasizes the iniquity of lust and the downfall of those who succumb to

We frequently see people who fall prey to addiction, be it food, drugs or alcohol. The religious world also has its share of those who cannot control their cravings, who are overwhelmed by temptation, who fall prey to unbridled desire. *Chazal* teach us that Hashem gave us an antidote to triumph over the wiles of the evil-inclination – the Torah. Torah study will keep us anchored to our timeless values and remind us of Hashem’s constant presence.

Temptation is strong, and people give in to it all the time. One wonders why or how someone who has basic intelligence would of his own free will opt to wallow in degradation and drugs, rather than live a life of health, success and pride for himself and his family. Why do people make terrible – and sometimes tragic – choices that ultimately destroy their lives and wreak havoc on the lives of their families? What possesses a person to throw everything away in search of money and self-gratification?

The power of the evil-inclination is awesome. It has the ability to blind a person temporarily and deprive him of his ability to think rationally. It grabs his heart and demands instant gratification. The individual who is ensnared by its wiles no longer cares about morals, self-respect, or the effect on his family. He wants it now. He does not consider consequences. *Yosef Ha’tzaddik* almost fell prey to the blandishments of the *yetzer hara*. Yet, he won due to a single reason – his father. *Chazal* teach us that Yosef was able to summon the inner strength to resist Potiphar’s wife, because he saw an image of his elderly father and everything that he represented. The image of *Yaakov Avinu*, the elderly Patriarch, prompted Yosef to ask himself if it was all worth it. Was it worth throwing away his heritage, his covenant, his self-respect for a fleeting moment of lust?

Once one asks that question, the *yetzer hara* has lost. This holds true for all temptation. When people stop to think of the consequences, when they query, “Is it worth it?” the contest is over. When they factor in the shame, the scandal, the potential ruin of their careers, the trauma and

suffering of their families, the destroyed future of their children, they will never succumb to the *yetzer hara*. Regrettably, some realize the consequences of their escapades too late for themselves and too late for their children.