

"And the people were as murmurers in the ears of Hashem... and the fire of Hashem burned among them and consumed them at the edge of the camp." (11:1) - "And the mixed multitude that was among them lusted and there wept again also the Bnei Yisrael." (11:4)

The *Torah* attributes two sins to *Bnei Yisrael*. There is a definite relationship between the *ohbbt,n* act and the ensuing sin of the *;xpxt*. Indeed, *Chazal* interpret the *pasuk* "*Bnei Yisrael began to weep again*" to teach us that the participants in the "*misonenim*," evil, were also *Bnei Yisrael*. *Horav S. Breuer, z.l.*, examines these two sins and discuss their connection with one another.

The one word, "*k'misonenim*," "*as murmurers*," seems to encapsulate the entire scope of their sin. *Chazal* offer two views of this travesty which seem to result from the concept of "*k'misonenim*." *Rashi* explains that "*misonenim*" represents *Bnei Yisrael's* excuse to sever their allegiance to Hashem. Proponents of the alternate view posit that they were mourning their "terrible" lot in life. These two perspectives employ contrasting orientations. Regarding the sin of "*asafsuf*," the *Torah* states that fire consumed "*at the edge of the camp*." Once again, *Chazal* express two views. One perspective suggests that the members of the lower social realm were consumed, and the second approach indicates that the fire consumed the rich and noble. We suggest that these two opposing views regarding the nature of the "*asafsuf*" correspond with the divergent opinions regarding the interpretation of the "*misonenim*."

Regarding the search for an excuse to defect from Hashem, "*misonenim*" refers to the lowest among the people as the active perpetrators of the act of desertion. During the course of Jewish history, many movements have arisen which have attempted to seduce the people away from Hashem. These traitors have never attempted to reveal their contempt for Judaism by overtly propagating rebellion against Hashem. Such an open display of treason was never an abject fear for Judaism. The rebellious movements have always concealed their disdain with "excuses." These hidden motives have served to attract their fellow Jews to their "cause" without revealing the true nature of their destructive plans. This was also true regarding the "*misonenim*."

The view which presents the "*misonenim*" as complainers who sought excuses attributes their characteristics to the lowest level of the people. These abysmal characters hid their goal. Their influence was based completely upon their ability to conceal their true objective, total abandonment of Hashem and the way of life He chose for us. The Divine fire which consumed the "*edge of the camp*" was, therefore, directed toward the lowest of the Jews.

The other interpretation presents "*misonenim*" as a form of mourning over oneself and one's lot. Although Hashem's loving care freed the people from worry concerning their daily sustenance, their trek in the desert deprived them of many of the comforts which make life attractive. This obviously

refers to the rich and noble who had been accustomed to material pleasures and complained about their deprivation. They were weary of their constraints and "mourned" over their fate. Their selfish and immature attitude was reflected by the act of *"asafsuf."*