

Behold! You have risen up in place of your fathers, a society of sinful people. (32:14)

At the end of *Talmud Sukkah* (56b) *Chazal* teach that the *mishmor*, watch, of Bilgah always divides in the south. This means: The incoming watch divides the *Lechem HaPanim*, Showbread, in the north, since most offerings were slaughtered in the northern side of the courtyard. Thus, it was apparent that they were the incoming *mishmor*. The outgoing watch divided the *Lechem HaPanim* in the south, so that it should be clear that they were leaving. The family of Bilgah always divided in the south as the result of an incident involving Miriam, the daughter of one of the *Kohanim* of the Bilgah family. She apostatized herself and married a Greek officer. Subsequently, when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, she scornfully kicked with her sandal on the Altar and exclaimed, “*Lucus, Lucus*, Wolf, Wolf (referring to the Altar as a devouring wolf), how long will you consume the many sacrifices of *Yisrael* and you do not stand by their side at a time of pressing need?” As a result of this abominable behavior, the entire *mishmor* was punished. The *Talmud* asks why did Hashem penalize Bilgah in response to the actions of his daughter? They explain, “It is correct to punish the entire watch, as people say, ‘The utterances of a child in public express the views of either his father or his mother.’” Clearly, this girl must have heard her father speak disdainfully of the Temple service.

The above is a frightening condemnation of the ramifications of a parent’s less-than-thought-out comments concerning a religious endeavor, an organization, or a person in a position of spiritual leadership. Had Miriam not heard a less than complimentary remark from her father concerning the Temple service, she quite possibly would not have eschewed Judaism.

This is what our *parsha* teaches us. The origin of the sins of the sons is in the actions of the fathers. When a father talks in *shul*, he shows his son that *davening* is not very important, that he does not value the *shul* very much. As time goes on, the son grows up and outdoes his father: he does not attend *shul* – period. The mother decides that the latest styles concocted by the delusionary designers in Paris is how a Jewish mother should dress. If she is not embarrassed by her mother’s lack of spiritual refinement, her daughter will probably outdo her later on in life. There is no status quo in Judaism. One either ascends, or plummets to the bottom. There is no reason for parents to give their children a head start by manifesting their own personal shortcomings.

The **Melitzer Rebbe, Shlita**, was questioned concerning those whose antipathy towards Torah has gotten the better of them, transforming them into self-loathing, bitter antagonists of Torah Judaism, who spew forth their virulent diatribe against Torah and its disseminators. How did they become this way? What is the origin of their *animus*? Indeed, some of these maligners have even had a somewhat decent Jewish education. What ticked them off? He explained that at one point, perhaps three or four generations earlier, they had an ancestor whose attitude toward Jewish observance was, at best, lackadaisical. He observed – but in a dispassionate way, almost as if he were compelled to do so. Over the years, his lethargic mindset intensified to the point that his

descendant now harbors an acrimonious distaste for the Torah way, so virulent that he feels compelled to make it his personal campaign to destroy this way of life.

As in most things, however, there is a flipside to this attitude. When a parent is *moser nefesh*, sacrifices himself, for the Torah way, even if it is on lesser degree, generations later this devotion will play itself out with *banim u'bnei banim oskim baTorah u'bamitzvos*, generations of descendants whose commitment to Torah is without peer. Any act of going beyond the call of duty will germinate into a tree of life that is not only esthetically pleasant, but its powers to sustain are enormous. It all depends on the type of seeds one plants.