

## How can I perpetrated this great evil and I have sinned against G-d! (39:9)

It is sad that those who – either by choice or by upbringing – live a life totally estranged from Torah have no clue how distant they are from the verities of the Torah, its values and proposed lifestyle. Many of them are well-meaning, good people, who simply do not know. They are clueless concerning what a Torah Jew believes and the lifestyle to which he adheres. I recently had occasion to have a conversation with a respected member of the secular Jewish clergy – which taught me how distant two minds can be from another. Yet, one of them thinks that he and I are both on the same page. Indeed, I almost felt bad for the man.

In the course of the conversation, he shared with me some of the more sinister *shailos*, questions, that are presented to him by serious-minded members of his community. He then asked me if I, too, deal with such issues. I explained that, since: our Torah neither permits interfaith marriages nor countenances alternative unions; drugs are not a part of our lifestyle; and the respect which children accord their parents is part of the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, – these issues almost never see the light of day. I then went on to reiterate that much of our difference in matters of the clergy is due to the fact that we really are not on the same page. True, we are all part of *Klal Yisrael*, but the contemporary lifestyle which is accepted and prevalent in today's society does not coincide with Torah outlook. He, of course, felt that I should “get a life” and emerge from the archaic cave in which I have cloistered myself.

Having said this, I share a meaningful *Midrash* which teaches us an eye-opening lesson. When Potifar's wife attempted to entice Yosef to sin with her – he demurred. She offered all sorts of blandishments, promising him the world, if he would only weaken his resolve and liaison with her. His response should have been, “Exclusive of the fact that I owe your husband so much, and, therefore, I could not I repay his favor with such a scurrilous deed: I must also consider the repugnant nature of having an affair, something that is prohibited even by conventional norms.” Yosef, however, did not say this. He went into a rendition of his sacred pedigree, “*HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, the Holy One blessed is He, often chooses someone from among the beloved of my ancestral home and asks of them to commit themselves to Him on a level that is beyond human cognition. My grandfather, Yitzchak, was selected as a sacrifice. Perhaps, I will be asked to commit myself to such a lofty endeavor, and, as a result of our liaison, I will become defiled as a *korban*, sacrifice.”

“Furthermore,” he said, “Hashem appears to those of my father's home whom He loves. He appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov in a dream. What will I do if He will call upon me, and I will be *tamei*, spiritually contaminated?”

This conversation is mind-boggling. This evil woman is talking about a licentious, illicit relationship, a base liaison that would be fitting for two animals, not human beings of any respectable standing.

Yet, Yosef responds with a litany on the spiritual nature of his home and the fear that if Hashem might call upon him, he would not be appropriately spiritually prepared.

In a powerful insight, **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita**, teaches us that this is expressly how we should respond to the *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination, and to those who would incite us to sin and turn away from Hashem. “We are not on the same page as you. You live in the dung heap of society; we live in the pinnacle, in the elite, ivory tower of humanity. You root with the pigs of the lowest echelon of humanity. Your core objectives focus on promiscuity and licentiousness, your lives revolve around the sensual; your behavior is uncontrolled and unprincipled. We simply cannot converse with you on an equal plane. Our outlook is different; our thoughts are loftier; our goals are totally antithetical to everything in which you believe.”

This, actually, is the core point of debate between a Jew and his *yetzer hora*. We are not on the same page. The *aveirah*, sin, which you are asking me to commit, is one that would be expected from a lesser person than I. As a Jew who hails from the noble lineage of the Patriarchs and holy Jews who, throughout the millennia, have sacrificed themselves for morality, for spirituality, ethics and the opportunity to serve Hashem – we are simply just not on the same page. We do not compete with the sewers of society. We dance to a different tune. Our Torah is our song; its holy words are our lyrics.

**Horav Shlomo Karliner, zl**, observes that the *yetzer hora*'s triumph over man emerges when he is able to cause man to forget that he is a prince. He offers an insightful analogy to explain this. The prince of the realm was about to take a trip throughout the kingdom. His servants prepared the clothes he would take with him. They also laid out his royal finery for him to wear. After all, he could not prance around like his subjects. His carriage was prepared. Even the horses were bedecked in accoutrements of the finest leather, gold and silver. The route taken by the entourage took them through a number of communities which were poverty-stricken, where the squalor in which the people lived was insufferable. The prince's carriage rode by these communities. On a typically warm day, he rode by a community wherein its residents lived in abject poverty. He noticed a group of young men, who were probably his age, rolling in the mud. Apparently, the mud maintained its cool temperature much longer than other elements. They seemed to be having a great time. Now, would the prince be envious of them? Would he stop the carriage and jump in with them into the mud? After all, it was a warm day. Anyone with a modicum of human intelligence knows the answer. They are simply not on the same page.