

The families of Bnei Kehas would encamp on the side of the Mishkan, to the south. (3:29)

Rashi notes that *shevet* Reuven camped nearby. This close proximity between *Shevet* Reuven and *shevet* Kehas is what caused Dasan and Aviram of the tribe of Reuven to be “pulled” along, to be influenced by Korach. His vilification of Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *Hakohen* gave him the distinction of being the first one to rebel against Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s leadership. Dasan and Aviram stood at the forefront of Korach’s ill-fated group of followers. They were “*nimshach*”, pulled along, by Korach because they were near him. *Rashi*’s use of the word “*nimshichu*”, they were pulled, as opposed to any other phrase denoting their being influenced by and following Korach tells us something. He could have said, “they agreed”, “they followed”; what is the significance of being “pulled along”?

Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita, infers a profound lesson from here. To be pulled along is to follow slowly, one step at a time, at times without thought or malice, just simply being attracted to follow the one who is pulling. This teaches us that one can be influenced unwittingly. He is privy to an occurrence, or is in the proximity of someone or something that leaves an impression on him – without realizing it. Over time, this impression impacts him so that his entire perspective changes.

The *Navi* tell us that, in his later years, Shlomo *Hamelech*’s wives catalyzed a change within him to the point that he turned to idol worship. *Chazal* explain that Shlomo definitely did not worship idols, but when he married Pharaoh’s daughter he did not protest the various musical instruments that she brought with her which were used for idol worship. This is enigmatic. Did he worship idols or not? If he did not worship idols, why does the *Navi* ascribe this terrible sin to him? **Horav Yaakov Moshe Lesin, Zl**, explains that the actual distance one is from sin is determined by the degree one is removed from sin. One’s ability to tolerate any form of evil brings him closer to that evil. There are those for whom the mere thought of involvement in a sin would be devastating. There are others who are not so far – they will merely laugh it off – but will not be revolted by the sin.

The manner in which one reacts to another who sins is also a determining factor in his own reservations to evil. The story is told that **Rav Chaim Brisker, zl**, was once walking with his father, the **Bais Halevi, zl**, on *Shabbos*, when they saw a Jew who was desecrating *Shabbos*. *Rav Chaim* was shocked, while the *Bais Halevi* fainted! *Rav Chaim* said afterwards, “Look at the difference between my father’s degree of “*richuk min ha’cheit*”, distancing himself from sin, and mine. I saw *chillul Shabbos* and was terribly upset. My father was so distraught that he fainted. He could not handle observing the sin of *chillul Shabbos*.”

This is what *Chazal* mean in regard to Shlomo *Hamelech*. True, he did not sin, but he came closer to evil when he tolerated its presence in his home. Shlomo *Ha’melech* was no longer the same. He theoretically, according to his spiritual level, acquiesced to idol worship. *Bnei Reuven*, because of their proximity to Korach, were “pulled” closer to sin and rebellion. Everytime one sees

an *aveirah*, sin, being flagrantly committed, he becomes closer to that sin. His distance from evil becomes that much shorter.