

For you pass into the covenant of Hashem, your G-d, and into his imprecation that Hashem, your G-d, seals with you today...Perhaps there is among you a man or woman, whose heart turns away today from being with Hashem. (29:11,17)

The *parsha* opens with everyone gathered together as Moshe initiates *Klal Yisrael* into the covenant for the final time. This may be the most idyllic moment in Jewish history. Everyone is together, unified in harmony one with another, about to be charged by Moshe at the closing scenes of his tenure as the quintessential leader of *Klal Yisrael*. It is an inspirational moment, marked by excitement about a job well done. This moment truly calls for the proverbial "pat on the back." They have made it! We observe, however, a turn of events. During this exalted moment in time, Moshe began to talk about suspicions - conjecture of possible undercurrents of rebellion. He addressed the man or woman, tribe or family, whose heart had turned away from Hashem. He identified a bitter root, festering, growing, waiting for that moment when it could surge forward in open defiance and turn to idol worship. While this is certainly a concern to address, is this the appropriate time for this admonishment? Why shatter this perfect moment?

Horav David Shneur, Shlita, notes that in Moshe's admonishment he builds his suspicion with great emphasis on one point - the heart, the seat of emotion and passion. "*Shalom yiheyeh li, ki bishrirus libi eilach* -- Peace be with me, though I walk as my heart sees it." The origin of his rebellion, the root of his defiance deeply imbedded, concealed from everyone - even himself - is the heart.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* exhorted each individual to introspect, to thoroughly search himself for that "*shoresh ra*" -- bitter root -- that would fester into greater evil, to the point that it will bring him down from the zenith of virtue to the nadir of depravity. From the virtuous *ben Torah*, he "suddenly" is transformed into an idol worshipper. It is all possible if one does not eradicate that bitter root. This is especially possible when one is so preoccupied with his virtue, his *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick, acts of loving kindness, daily *tefillah*. Indeed, he might even be one of those people who take Judaism very seriously, always seeking to perform the *mitzvah* to the extreme. This type of Jew is so preoccupied with his *frumkeit* that he overlooks the real source of his problem. In fact, he has no clue as to his error.

At this specific moment everyone was gathered together, each secure in his spiritual position, at peace with himself and with one another. Moshe did not praise their accomplishments. Rather, he advised introspection and the search for any hidden "roots" that might germinate and develop into full-blown evil. Moshe understood that a real leader offers praise when it is deserving, but does not shy away from critique when it is necessary. He told the people that they were doing great, but never to forget that there might be something sinister lurking in the innermost recesses of their hearts.

This idea is expressed by the **Ben Ish Chai** in his interpretation of the *pasuk* (29:28), "*The hidden (sins) are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed (sins) are for us and our children forever.*" He said that if our innermost hidden thoughts are reserved for Hashem, then we can be secure that our *niglos*, our revealed actions, will be pure and untainted by the effect of the evil inclination. Consequently, we will merit that our positive actions will be transmitted to our offspring.