

## When a ruler sins...unintentionally, and becomes guilty. (4:22)

*Rashi* notes that the *pasuk* which addresses the sin committed by the *Nasi*/leader of the people begins with the word “*asher*,” whereas the previous *pesukim* began with the word “*im*,” if. He cites the *Sifra* that says that the word “*asher*” alludes to “*ashrei*,” fortunate. This implies that a generation whose leadership is concerned and seeks atonement -- even for their unknown sins -- is truly fortunate. The **Noam Elimelech** gives insight into the “good fortune” of the generation whose leader atones for the sins. A distance, an insurmountable breach, exists between the *tzaddik*, the righteous, pious man, and the common Jew who from time to time, falls prey to sin. How is the *tzaddik* to help his lost brother? How is he to reach out to him and bring him back? It may be compared to one who has fallen into a pit filled with dung and filth. As he sinks deeper and deeper into the quagmire that is slowly swallowing him up, he cries out for help, pleading for his life. In order to pull him out and save him, the rescuer must himself become slightly dirty. He must bend over into the pit and reach out to help his friend in need.

It is the same with regard to helping a fellow Jew who is drowning in sin. The *tzaddik* has to reach in and, at times, get himself dirty. Hashem facilitates the *tzaddik* by having him err unintentionally, by availing him a sin that is insignificant by common standards. Suddenly the *tzaddik* is no longer on an untouchable pedestal. He has gotten his feet slightly dirty in the pit. Now, however, he is in the proximity of the Jew who has sunken into the pit. He can now reach out and help. Since the common Jew is not able to attain the *tzaddik*'s spiritual distinction, it is up to the *tzaddik* to “bend down” and lift up his fellow man.

We find *tzaddikim* who are willing to relinquish their portion in *Olam Habah* in order to save another Jew from spiritual and even material loss. There is a story told about **Rav Baruch M'Meziboz**, who was sitting at a festive meal surrounded by his *chassidim*, when unexpectedly the door opened and a famous wealthy member of the community entered, seeking the *Rebbe*'s advice. Instead of greeting the guest with the usual respect accorded to distinguished visitors, the *Rebbe* disparaged the man mercilessly, denigrating and humiliating him in front of the assemblage. He ended his tirade by having the man thrown out of the house. Needless to say, all those who witnessed this occurrence were dumbfounded in disbelief at the *Rebbe*'s actions. One of those assembled gathered up enough courage to ask the *Rebbe* for an explanation. After all, do *Chazal* not say that if one publicly embarrasses another Jew, he loses his portion in *Olam Habah*? The *Rebbe* responded that when the wealthy man entered his home, he saw a cloud of severe punishment hovering over him. To spare him the pain and anguish that he would suffer, the *Rebbe* humiliated him unsparingly, hoping to eliminate this terrible *gzar din*, decree. He was willing to surrender his own portion in *Olam Habah* in order to help another Jew. It is truly tragic when we realize how frequently people humiliate someone for much less significant cause.