

Harass the Midyanim. (25:17)

The *Midyanim* and *Moavim* facilitated the plot against the Jewish People by causing them to commit idolatry. They achieved this diabolical goal by inciting the Jewish men to acts of immorality with the pagan women. *Tzaror*, harass, is a constant form of enmity. *Chazal* (*Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah* 25) teach that one who causes his fellow to sin is worse than one who physically takes his life. One who murders does not cause his fellow to lose his eternal place in the World to Come. One who causes another to sin, however, makes him lose both worlds. We see this from the attitude which we are instructed to take regarding our enemies. *Edom* and *Mitzrayim* attempted to wipe us out physically; we are commanded not to hate them. Yet, descendants of *Ammon* and *Moav*, whose goal was to destroy our moral fibre and bring us down as the *Am Hashem*, nation of G-d, are not permitted to enter the Jewish nation through marriage.

At first glance, one might think that the prohibition against *Ammon* and *Moav* entering *kahal*, the congregation of *Klal Yisrael*, is a punishment for their actions. *Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl*, explains otherwise. It is not a punishment, but rather, a description of their character. People who exhibit such contempt for another fellow's spirituality, who are *machati*, cause another to sin, have a character deficit from which we must distance ourselves. The turpitude of this person's spiritual persona is so evil that he must be removed from our presence – forever. Such a spiritual stain cannot be expunged.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* notes that it is specifically in response to this type of behavior – in which one's actions, demeanor, or attitude can cause someone to distance himself from an observant lifestyle – that one must exert special vigilance. We do not realize it, but if our actions cause someone to leave *Yiddishkeit*, we are guilty of *machtio*, causing him to sin – for which there remains an eternal stain! One is considered a *rotzeach*, murderer, if, due to his action, a *Yid* leaves the fold.

On a positive note is the flipside, whereby, through one's actions, a Jew who has strayed returns home to an observant lifestyle. Can we imagine the extraordinary reward in store for him?