

If your brothers... will incite you... saying, “Let us go and worship the gods of others,” that you did not know, you or your forefathers. (13:7)

Rashi explains the meaning of, “That you did not know, you or your forefathers”: “This matter is of great disgrace to you. For even the other nations (pagans) do not reject what their ancestors passed on to them, but this *meisis*, inciter, says to you, ‘Abandon what your ancestors passed on to you.’” Why does *Rashi* point the finger at the individual who is being incited to leave Judaism, intimating that it is humiliating to him to reject the traditions of his forebears, when, in fact, the individual who should be humiliated is the one who is acting disgracefully – the *meisis*, inciter. Why does *Rashi* focus on the victim, rather than his instigator? It is quite possible that the victim is a G-d-fearing, decent Jew, who holds dear the traditions handed down to him from previous generations. If he would be left alone, he quite possibly would continue along on his previous path of observance.

This teaches us, explains *Horav Eliyahu Boruch Finkel, zl*, that it is a disgrace for the victim the mere fact that the inciter considered him a good “mark”. The fact that the inciter knew his customer, that he was acutely aware of the victim’s spiritual deficiency, is reason enough to be humiliated. Why did he choose you, why not any one of the other people in your circle of friends? He probably knows something about you, some sinister secret, one that alludes to your true spiritual character – not the sham that you present in public.

Concerning the spiritual/moral character of Rivkah *Imeinu*, the Torah writes, *V’ish lo yedaah*, “Whom no man had known.” Rivkah’s reputation was pristine. She was so morally unblemished that no man would even entertain the notion of attempting a liaison with her. *Horav Meir Shapiro, zl*, underscored our Matriarch’s reputation. The flies go to the garbage. No man who had evil intent on his mind would gravitate toward Rivkah. They knew that she was chaste and pure. It would be a waste of time.

We can derive another lesson from the Torah’s focus on the *meisis*’ rejection of tradition. We note that with every abandonment of *Toras Moshe*, our holy Torah, we also, by extension, reject our *mesorah*, tradition, that has carefully been transmitted through the generations. Regardless of when the “family” left the fold, whether it was when their great-grandfather emigrated to America or it harks back to Europe or to Russia, at one point they were all committed Torah Jews. Someone veered to the left, and this slight deviation altered his spiritual trajectory, so that years later, his descendants were prepared to follow the road that tragically led to the baptismal font. When we break with tradition, we no longer connect to the anchor that keeps us securely grounded in place. Without the stability of the past, the present winds of change will batter us to the point that the options of a future will sadly become non-existent. This is why the slightest deviation – unless it is checked and righted immediately – can alter the course for all time.