

And Hashem will forgive her, for her father had restrained her. (30:6)

The implication is that the girl sinned, and, as a result, she requires Hashem's forgiveness; but if her father had revoked her *nedarim*, what prohibition did she transgress? This applies to a girl who was unaware that her *nedarim* had been revoked, and, despite being bound by *neder* (in her mind), she violated its terms. In actuality, she did not sin, but she certainly acted inappropriately, thus mandating for herself some form of repentance. *Chazal* compare this to one who meant to eat ham and instead ended up eating kosher meat. Technically, he did not sin, but his intention was sinful, requiring him to repent. Rabbi Akiva would weep concerning this *halachah*, noting that if one requires penance for a negative intention which did not actually achieve fruition, how much more so should he be vigilant not to commit the actual deed. Is Rabbi Akiva teaching us that one should not intentionally sin? Why is Rabbi Akiva concerned with the individual who executes his intentional sinful thoughts?

Horav Chizkiyah Eliezer Cohen, zl (Rosh Yeshivah, Bais Yosef, Gateshead), explains that Rabbi Akiva teaches an important lesson concerning the parameters of sin. We are accustomed to determining the egregiousness of a sin in accordance with its external image. Some deeds have greater negative appearances than others. People tend to assess the intensity of a crime by its external projection. Rabbi Akiva teaches us that a sin is not defined solely by its visible negative impact, i.e., by how people view the deed; the more revolting it is, the greater its iniquity. A sin is also measured by the thought behind the action, the intention that provokes and drives the deed.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* cites the *Chovos HaLevavos*, who teaches that a person be held accountable in accordance with his perception and discernment. One who has greater depth, who has the ability to comprehend his actions and their impact, both immediate and far-ranging, will be held to a different benchmark than one whose level of discernment is limited.

He analogizes this to one whose specialty and business expertise are limited to scrap metal. He owns a large junkyard where he compresses and melts the scrap. One day someone offers him the opportunity to purchase an expensive private jet, outfitted with the latest high-tech advances, at a sale price, but he is not interested in it. He prices the jet by how much metal it has – not by its technological ability. He will pay only for its metal weight. How a person views an item not only determines its value (to him), but also serves as an indication of his essence. A sin committed without aforethought is different from one executed by an intelligent, thinking individual, intent on transgressing Hashem's command.