

A wound for a wound. (21:25)

The *Torah* teaches us the laws of bodily damage against another person. *Chazal* derive from this *pasuk* that "*adam muad l'olam*," "a man is forever held responsible for his actions." The concepts of "unintentional", "unaware", "did not mean to" - do not apply. Man is always held accountable for his actions. Furthermore, we are taught that if one lays down to sleep near vessels belonging to someone else and during the course of his sleep he breaks the vessels, he is liable for damages. Although the actual damage was performed while he was asleep, he caused the damage by laying down where he did.

Horav Shimon Shkop, zl, infers a significant lesson from here regarding self-inflicted spiritual damage. One who moves too close to a spiritual/philosophic movement that might cause him harm is held responsible. True, the actual sin was accidental. He unknowingly fell in. Why did he venture into dangerous territory? Had he not gotten so close he would not have been harmed.

Chazal tell us that one does not sin unless a "*ruach shtus*," a spirit of foolishness had first entered into him. *Chazal* analogize this to one who bends over a well and peers inside. Suddenly, a strong wind blows him into the well. While his fall was accidental, had he not been there the wind could not have blown him in. The wind of foolishness, the external influences that cause one to err, are accidental. If the person would not be involved with have an association with the place/person/group/activity which is of questionable character, however, he would not have "fallen in." We note how important it is to distance oneself from anything or anyone that could spiritually imperil him. We never know when a "strong wind" can blow our way.