

## Hashem said to Moshe, “Behold, you will lie with your forefathers, but this people will rise up after the gods of the foreigners. (31:16)

It is incredible, even enigmatic, that the *Torah* speaks about *Klal Yisrael* in such a manner. Earlier the *Torah* said, “*And you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today.*” Now they are being admonished regarding the rebellion they will make after Moshe’s passing. It is like predicting that someone who is currently on a high spiritual plane will commit one of the greatest, heinous sins. Does this make sense? Are we to anticipate that the *yeshivah* student who is studying *Torah*, uninterrupted, unaffected by the outside world, will become an uncontrolled, unashamed sinner once he leaves the shelter of the *yeshivah*?

*Horav Gershon Liebman, zl*, cites the *Ramban* who says that Hashem assesses a person’s potential based upon his actions of the past. In other words, had *Klal Yisrael* not sinned earlier in their sojourn, they would not have set a precedent by which would be judged in the future. *Sforno* agrees in this critique, writing that based solely upon their past history, *Klal Yisrael’s* interest in entering *Eretz Yisrael* was self-gratification.

This brings *Horav Liebman* to posit that sin is more than an act of happenstance. Rather, it is the defining moment in a person’s character, as it establishes his tendency toward sinful behavior.

Sin is no longer a potential, but an apparent possibility. *Chazal* reveal to us that a sin is an indication of a person’s essence. *Klal Yisrael* achieved a remarkable level of *kedushah*, holiness; yet, the portent for the future was still there. Hashem, therefore, admonished them not to be secure in their present spiritual plateau. They had also sinned. It was a definite strain upon their character and, thus, an area of concern.

This should be a lesson to all of us: We cannot “*mach a’vek*,” disregard, a sinful act as a one-time occurrence. These acts do not “just happen.” They are the result of an overactive *yetzer hora*, evil inclination - one that can just as easily lift its ugly head with even more serious consequences. There is no greater ammunition than being forewarned. Regrettably, some of us think we know it all, a “knowledge” that is the precursor of sin.