

"And you will say in your heart, it is my strength and the power of my hand that performed this valorous deed... and walk after other gods and serve them." (8:17-19)

As *Bnei Yisrael* neared the culmination of their forty year trek in the desert, Moshe warned them of the pitfalls that might accompany their successful entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. As they forged their way, conquering the seven nations whose might was to prove no match for the Divinely ordained army of *Bnei Yisrael*, they might fall prey to pride and haughtiness. They might even begin to believe that their own military prowess enabled them to defeat their enemies. They might forget that it was Hashem who had promised them that these events would occur and that it was only through His Divine assistance that they had been so successful.

We derive from this narrative that the evil inclination can entice one into denying the most obvious reality. How could *Bnei Yisrael* even momentarily believe that their untrained army could defeat mighty, fortified nations? How could they audaciously accept credit for such an apparent miracle? Hashem clearly manifested His hand by directing the war effort and guiding *Bnei Yisrael* to victory. The evil inclination, however, affects one's insecurities, gradually influencing one to accept convenient and irrational notions that support self-government.

The *Torah* seems to extend this form of arrogance a step further: *And you will go after other gods and serve them*. The sequence of *pesukim* implies a deviation from the path of serving Hashem which can result from this form of misguided arrogance. This, in turn, can eventually lead one to idol worship. Haughtiness can stimulate a belittling of Hashem's *mitzvos* reflected by a gradual waning of their consistent performance. Must this arrogance necessarily evolve into idol worship? Indeed, *Horav Yitzchok Aizik Sher Z"l* explains that such a self-aggrandizement is in itself a form of idol worship. Arrogance intrinsically nourishes the lack of recognition of Hashem's supremacy. Where the concept of "Hashem" reigns, there is no room for pride and arrogance. He accompanies this concept with the idea that one who feels that he himself has great capabilities will likewise respect his friend's capabilities. One should always be aware of his own limitations as a human being. Hashem has bestowed upon us all of the unique gifts with which we are endowed.

Horav Moshe Shternbuch Shlita states that individuals who actually attribute their success to their own "omnipotence" will tend to refrain from giving charity to those who are not as fortunate as they are. They will say, *"I worked hard to accumulate my wealth, let others do the same."* Such impudence not only lacks refinement and sensitivity, but it also exhibits a form of vulgarity which

demonstrates a crude spirit and an obtuse mind.

Upon noticing a fellow Jew hurrying down the street, *Horav Levi Yitzchok of Barditchev Z"l* questioned him as to why he was running so. The Jew answered quickly that he was running to make a livelihood. The "*Berdichever*" responded, "*How do you know that your livelihood is in front of you, that you run towards it? Perhaps it is behind you and you are running away from it!*" This terse comment encapsulates our thesis. We never know what Hashem plans for us. We must therefore, endeavor to do what is necessary and pray that it is consistent with Hashem's wishes for us. As it says in *Tehillim 55*, "*Cast your burden upon Hashem and He will support you.*"