

But a man who is pure and was not on the road and had refrained from making the Pesach-offering, that soul shall be cut off from its people. (9:13)

On the one hand, we find that, throughout most of the Torah, we have confidence in people making the right choices. Man is trusted and allowed to make his own choice between right and wrong, good and evil. Despite the obstacles and numerous pitfalls, man is allowed the option to navigate the murky waters of life on his own – without that Divine “nudge.” On the other hand, in certain instances the Torah is quite up front in directing the person in no uncertain terms, concerning the way it expects him to act. There is no room for error – the admonishment is extraordinary – the punishment is serious – regardless of the sinner’s station in life. Why is there this inconsistency? Is it man – or is it the compelling nature of the circumstances in which man finds himself with regard to certain *mitzvos*?

Horav Aharon Ogolnick, zl, one of Novardok’s premier students and *Menahel Ruchoni* in Ostrov, is quoted in *Gevilei Eish* that provides an explanation for this incongruity. In *Avos D’R’Nosson* 9:4, *Chazal* emphasize the importance of distancing oneself from evil people, due to the negative influence they impart. This applies even to the performance of a *mitzvah*. *Chazal* have a powerful understanding of human nature; thus, they recognize an individual’s gravitational pull to the nefarious behavior of a *rasha*, wicked person. Indeed, the danger of falling under the influence of evil far supersedes the good that is generated by the *mitzvah*. In other words, it is just not worth the gamble, because the person will lose.

He cites a classic example from our *Parsha*, in which the Torah introduces the laws of *Pesach Sheini*. These laws are unique in that, under most conditions, if a person misses the opportunity to do a *mitzvah*, he has missed it. No make-ups are available. This is especially true when the *mitzvah* is time bound, such as in the case of the *korbanos* associated with specific Festivals. Once the Festival is over, the opportunity for offering the *Korban* is also over. Not so the *Korban Pesach*, which may be brought one month later, if his failure to attend *Pesach* services in the Temple had been due to no fault of his own. The Torah then makes a point of reiterating that anyone who is negligent in offering the *Korban Pesach* will be spiritually excised from the nation. One wonders why the Torah places this enjoinder in the middle of the laws of *Pesach Sheini*, when, in fact, it belongs earlier at the time that it mentions the laws of *Pesach Rishon*, the first *Pesach*.

The *Mashgiach* explains that specifically because there is a *halachic* dispensation of *Pesach Sheini*, there is reason to fear that a person will find *kulos*, leniencies, and excuses not to offer the first *Korban Pesach* in its prescribed time. In other words, when a dispensation exists, when people are aware of a make-up date, they will often ignore the first date – on purpose. We look for *kulos*, and one *kulah* leads to another until the basic foundation of *mitzvah* observance is undermined. Thus, the Torah makes a point to interject the laws of *Pesach Sheini* with a reminder: This

dispensation is provided only for someone who had been unable to be in Yerushalayim on time. Someone who is looking for an excuse to circumvent the *Korban* is a sinner and will be appropriately punished.