

The hidden things (sins) are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed things (sins) are for us. (29:28)

If ever there has been a *pasuk* that addresses the ills of contemporary society, it is this one. On all levels of exegesis, it speaks to us and the issues which plague many of us. Simply, the Torah is addressing those who contend that they cannot be held responsible for those Jews who sin covertly, who conceal their miscreancy, often under a façade of righteousness. Not only are they not sinners – they are righteous! How dare anyone impugn their spiritual integrity? Hashem's response is quite forward: Do not worry about them. The hidden sin(s) are in My domain. I will address the sinners. They think they can pull the wool over the eyes of their contemporaries. Perhaps they can, but they cannot fool Hashem. For the apathetic Jew who seeks refuge behind the words, "I am not observant;" or "I am no longer Orthodox;" "It is my teacher's fault," all of these are sham excuses. They are pretexts to cover up the truth about one's nefarious activities.

We have fallen under the influence of contemporary society. Public opinion plays a dominant role in our lives. We dress to conform with the styles that are in vogue. We speak the language of the street. We have adopted the values of society. Indeed, our total demeanor reflects contemporary society. Our role models, who we want most to emulate, sadly represent moral hypocrisy. Hashem tells us that we should not worry about the "hidden sinners."

Ramban adds that the *pasuk* addresses the sinner whose sins are so concealed that even **he does not know** what they are! This is probably the result of unfamiliarity with the law. Hashem tells us that what we have to worry about are the *niglos*, those sins that are readily detected. He will deal with the others.

Last, this *pasuk* applies to those Jews who are so assimilated that their Jewish origins have been completely forgotten. Hashem tells us that they are not our concern. At the appropriate time, He will reunite them with the remainder of the Jewish nation.

We have before us three forms of *nistaros*: the one who conceals his sins; the one whose sins are so "concealed" that even he himself is unaware of them; and the hidden Jew whose sins have taken him over the spiritual deep end to the point that he no longer knows that he is Jewish.

Let us address each of these *nistaros*: The first *nistar* is the hypocrite who sins covertly. On the one hand, we may be *melameid z'chus*, find justifiable merit, for his evil – at least he still has a sense of shame. He is not ready to flaunt his flagrant desecration of the Torah. Even in this area of concealed transgression, we find "creative" approaches to miscreancy. There is, of course, the blatant sinner who simply commits his iniquity in private. While he has never claimed to be righteous, he is not prepared to publicly sever his relationship with the Torah.

Another attitude reeks of sham piety and duplicity. This is the approach of the individual who

presents himself as a saint, but, in reality, is a sinner. Indeed, it is specifically in the area for which he demands *tzaddik*, righteous recognition, that his insidious behavior is concealed. We refer to the individual who affixes *kala ilan*, blue dye, to his *Tallis* and calls it *techeiles*, wool dyed with the blood of a *chalazon*, fish whose known identity is disputed. The *Talmud* in *Bava Metzia* 61b teaches us about this character, but, first, a few words of introduction.

The Torah requires us to wear *Tzitzis*, fringes, made of wool on our four-cornered garments. One of the four threads which are doubled over into eight should be colored *techeiles*, which is something like sky-blue. This blue dye is supposed to be derived from the blood of the *chalazon*, which, as previously mentioned, is problematic due to a Rabbinic dispute concerning its identity. Therefore, the majority of Jews do not wear *techeiles*.

In the *Talmud Bava Metzia* 61b, *Chazal* quote Hashem as saying, “I will punish one who dyes one of his *Tzitzis* with a blue dye, *kala ilan*, and claims it to be *techeiles*.” Is the man doing anything wrong to anyone? Is he hurting his fellowman? No. He is simply being a phony, a moral hypocrite. Most people do not wear *techeiles* anyway. Who is he harming? *Chazal* are issuing a protest against deceitfulness and hypocrisy. This man’s sanctimony covers up an individual who is very insecure. Anyone who presents himself as self-righteous and decent in an attempt to deceive others is actually a very sick person. He may fool many people, but he cannot fool Hashem, Who will exact punishment from him. A man who will lie about his *mitzvah* performance will be dishonest in his business dealings with his fellowman. Such a person is an insult to the Jewish community. Since his deception harms no one other than himself, we cannot do a thing to him, but Hashem will.

I recently saw a quotation from *Horav Avraham Chen, zl*, a *Rav* in Russia and later in *Eretz Yisrael*. He writes in his *Sefer B’malchus Ha’Yahadus* that the reverse is also true. This refers to one who possesses *techeiles*, yet refuses to wear it because he is afraid of what people might say. He is concerned lest he is suspected of being a “*frumi*,” strictly observant, one who is meticulous in carrying out *mitzvos*. This is the fellow who always plays down his religious observance, fearing it would make him less popular. He tells everyone that what he is wearing is *kala ilan*, when, in fact, it is *techeiles*. He gives excuses for his *Yarmulke*, his *Shemiras Shabbos*, keeping kosher, and so many other *mitzvos*. It is not good for business to be too *frum* – or so he claims. He is a moral coward who refuses to stand up for his convictions. One who does not take pride in his Jewishness has a more serious problem than he realizes. *Ha’nistaros l’Hashem Elokeinu*, The Almighty will address the bad generated by such actions. A person who is a moral cripple, who does not have the strength to support his convictions, is a danger to society.

According to *Ramban*, the next *nistar*, hidden sin, is the result of *am ha’aratzus*, illiteracy and an unfamiliarity with the law. The cure for this problem is learning. By studying Torah and quenching one’s thirst for knowledge, one learns how to perform *mitzvos* properly, and how to distance himself from sin. One who has the opportunity to learn but does not, can hardly claim that he did not know that this activity was prohibited. Had he learned, he would be knowledgeable. He just did

not care enough.

The last *nistar* is not a sin, but an individual who has long forgotten that he is Jewish. Assimilation has taken its toll on him. Our concern regarding him is the concern of a brother for a brother. To observe so many of our brethren, individuals who are decent, ethically and morally upright, be washed away by the waves of assimilation, hurts. To see Jews by birth who have no clue concerning what this means, leaves one feeling empty. It is like watching someone die. Many of them never had a chance, as they themselves are the product of generations of assimilation. Hashem assures us that He will deal with these

“hidden Jews.” Every time we come across such a Jew and the opportunity for reaching out to him avails itself, we should remember that this is probably part of Hashem’s plan to bring back the *nistaros*. To ignore the opportunity – or worse – to eschew it – is to disregard Hashem’s plan. **We** are part of His Divine plan. By turning a blind eye to what we see and turning a deaf ear to what we hear is to declare to the Almighty, “I want no part of this.” Perhaps, this might be something to consider the next time the opportunity arises.