

And the land was filled with corruption. (6:11)

In the *Midrash*, *Chazal* teach that "corruption" refers to idolatry. We may wonder why idolatry stands out as the primary sin of that generation. What is there about "*chamas*," corruption, that infers idolatry? **Horav Yaakov Kaminetzky, zl**, responds by first defining the essence of idolatry. We are taught that if a certain city has decided to reject one ritual of the *taryag*, 613 *mitzvos*, regardless of the type of *mitzvah*, that city is declared an "*Ir Hanidachas*," a city that went astray and is to be totally destroyed.

Accordingly, asks *Rav Yaakov*, why should the fate of the generation of the flood have been decided because of idolatry? In truth, any sin which the people had committed on principle would have sealed their fate. To reject even one *mitzvah* of the *Torah* on principle is tantamount to serving idols. Such actions implicitly deny the divine origin of the *mitzvos*. *Taryag mitzvos* constitute one G-d-given entity. To displace or deny a *mitzvah* is to cause the entire structure to come tumbling down. As a servant cannot tell his master what to do, so, too, we cannot tell Hashem how to govern the world. If He has given us 613 commandments, then we must keep all 613 commandments. To refuse to observe even one command, is tantamount to open rebellion against Hashem. Our refusal denies Hashem's supremacy.

The people of that generation rejected the "*bein adam lechaveiro*," the laws governing man's relationship with his fellow man. They accepted cheating, stealing and other forms of corruption on principle. They denied that Hashem had established a specific code for humans. Their actions denoted *avodah zarah*, idolatry.

We must ask ourselves whether we ever reject a *mitzvah* because we feel it is not practical. Do we concoct our own interpretations of *mitzvos* to suit our lifestyles? We must remember that the difference between an idol worshipper and an observant Jew can be a single *mitzvah*.