

Any man whose wife shall go astray and commit treachery against him. (5:12)

Rashi comments that the *Torah* specifically employs the word *tisteh* with a sin as opposed to a *samach*-- to describe the woman's going astray in being unfaithful to her husband. The word *tisteh* is connected to the word *shtus*, which means foolishness. Hence, *Chazal* say that one who commits an act of adultery or becomes a partner in an immoral relationship has "lost his mind". As *Chazal* describes it, "A spirit of foolishness has entered his mind." They cite the *pasuk* in *Mishlei*, 6:32, "He who has illicit relations with a woman lacks a heart."

In his commentary on *Pirkei Avos*, the ***Maharal*** explains that *gilui arayos*, immorality, by its very nature, is the antithesis of *Torah*. By studying *Torah*, one develops his mind and intellect, thereby elevating himself above his base desires. The mind distinguishes a human being from an animal. One who defers to his animalistic desires is really no different than an animal. Indeed, *Chazal* explain the reason that the *sotah's korban* is composed of barley, as opposed to other *kobanos* which use flour. Barley is a food animals consume. Since the unfaithful wife acted in a manner unbecoming a human being, her sacrifice should reflect her recent act of debasement. Immorality, says *Maharal*, is an act of depravement which befits an animal, not a human being.

Furthermore, as *Chazal* reiterate a number of times, one does not act immorally unless he has been captivated by a *ruach shtus*, a spirit of foolishness. He acts foolishly; he loses control of his senses and acts like an animal.

The only way that one is able to prevent a breakdown of his *seichal*/senses is through *Torah*. By studying *Torah* and applying its lessons to one's life, he nurtures his mind in order to strengthen it enough to control the passions of the heart and the weakness of the flesh. *Torah* elevates a person to the point that a *ruach shtus* cannot penetrate his mind and destroy his humanness.

Regarding the *pasuk* in *Mishlei* cited above, *Chazal* in the *Talmud Sanhedrin 99b* say, "He who has illicit relations with a woman lacks a heart;" this refers to one who studies *Torah* at irregular intervals. *Maharal* explains the lesson of this maxim, and its analogy to an illicit relationship, in the following manner: To study *Torah* without regularity undermines its dignity. It is comparable to one who has no specific mate, but, rather, dallies with a woman at his convenience. A man who has a wife has a steady mate to whom he is committed. One who merely picks his relationships according to his whims and fancy does not really have any relationship. Surely, he does not have a mate.

It is similar with regard to *Torah*. One who studies *Torah* casually, when he is in the mood or when he is inspired for a few days, does not really possess *Torah*. Instead, his relationship to *Torah* lacks integrity. He shows no commitment, he is toying with the *Torah*. When one takes a haphazard approach to any activity, it is generally a humiliation to the subject. It indicates that the

endeavor is overshadowed by what is really essential to the individual. To permit the *Torah* to be eclipsed by other endeavors is to demean it. Nothing takes second place to the *Torah*.