

## Behold, a man of Bnei Yisrael came and brought a Midyanite woman near to his brothers. (25:6)

During a meeting of *rabbonim* held in Yerushalayim, an individual raised a question to the august assemblage. Suddenly an older man arose and addressed the group, "My friends, I am beyond the age of seventy, and I can, therefore, assure you that I am beyond being tainted by the pursuit of honor. I suggest that we render the following decision..." He went on to state his "humble" opinion. Upon hearing this, **Horav Leib Chasman, zl**, who was one of the attendees at the meeting, stood up and emphatically said, "With all due respect, I must disagree with my colleague. It is a well-known premise that when one organ or sense of the body becomes weakened, the slack is picked up by the rest of the body. For this reason, when one advances with age, as his physical desires lessen, his desire for honor and importance grows commensurately. We must therefore, be concerned with the *yetzer hora* for *kavod*, especially for one who has grown old.

**Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl**, cited this incident to support this idea, using Zimri as proof. *Maharsha* proves that Zimri was at least two hundred and fifty years old when he publicly ridiculed Moshe *Rabbeinu*. One would wonder how such a distinguished and aged leader would act so foolishly. What would provoke Zimri to behave in such a destructive manner?

The answer, claims *Rav Chaim*, is to be inferred from *Chazal* in the *Talmud Sanhedrin 82b*, who relate how it all happened. When Moshe instituted the judges to execute all those who had worshipped the idol Peor, the members of the tribe of Shimon came to Zimri and complained, "Look what our young leaders are doing. Are you going to just sit back while people much younger than you render decisions involving capital punishment?" As soon as Zimri heard this, he gathered together twenty four thousand Jews and publicly impugned Moshe's authority.

This occurred as the result of the yearning for a little *kavod*. Zimri could not tolerate the idea that he would be viewed as inadequate in comparison to the "younger" Moshe. The downfall of an aged and distinguished scholar, one who had survived so much, resulted from an overactive ego. How tragic is the quest for *kavod*.