

And behold you have risen up in the place of your fathers, a group of transgressors, to add to Hashem's anger against Yisrael. For if you will turn away from Him, He will once again let them remain in the Wilderness, and you will destroy this entire nation. (32:14,15)

The Tribes of Reuven and Gad approached Moshe *Rabbeinu* with a unique request. It was not as if they did not care about *Eretz Yisrael*; it was just that, on the eastern side of the Yarden River, the newly-conquered land was extremely fertile. This would be a boon for the many livestock which they possessed. Thus, they hoped to be allowed to remain on *eiver ha'Yarden*, rather than move to *Eretz Yisrael* proper. They did not mean to be insolent. They were just being practical. Grass was more plentiful here. Why *shlep* to *Eretz Yisrael*, if what they needed for their livestock was to be found right where they stood?

Understandably, Moshe took umbrage with their request, and he let them know his feelings. What right did they have to say, "We are not interested in going to *Eretz Yisrael*? We like it here." Moshe added that this same attitude had precursed their forebears' downfall, eventually causing the entire nation to lose its opportunity to enter the Holy Land: "You have risen up in the place of your fathers... for if you will turn away from Him, he will once again let them remain in the wilderness." In other words, *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* were going down the same slippery slope that had doomed their fathers and the entire nation. They, too, would be the cause of the nation's destruction.

Strong words. *Targum Onkelos* translates, "If you will turn away from Him," as, "If you will turn away from fearing Him." Apparently, their *yiraas Shomayim* was deficient. But in what way? All they wanted was to receive the newly-conquered land for themselves – in place of their allotted portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. Was that so bad? Perhaps their attitude manifested a shortcoming in their *bein adam l'chaveiro*, relationships between man and fellow man. They were expecting the entire nation to go to war, while they sat on *eiver ha'yarden* tending to their livestock. It seems that their sin was more of egocentrism than a lack of fear of Heaven.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, explains that it is all about one's focus. One who sits alone in his home, with all of the shades down, sees nothing but himself. His focus is turned inwards – toward himself. He is the epicenter, the nexus of the room. If he were to raise the shades, he would be availed the opportunity to observe the whole world that is out there. The blue sky and shining sun, the people walking on the street, would all have new meaning to him, because he would have just been exposed to a world that is not only about himself. When a person's focus is directed inward, he sees only himself. Nobody else matters; nobody else counts. It is only when he shifts his focus outward that he realizes other people are out there, and there is a Creator Whom he has ignored, because he has been too busy focusing on himself.

Accordingly, a flaw in one's *bein adam l'chaveiro* relationships is a clear indication of a flaw in his relationship with Hashem. His *yiraas Shomayim* is deficient. When *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* manifested a deficit in *bein adam l'chaveiro*, it bespoke a shortcoming in their *yiraas Shomayim*.

In a study of successful people conducted by Harvard Business School, the researchers arrived at a number of important conclusions concerning the meaning of success and the goals and objectives of those individuals who truly stand above the rest – not necessarily in the caliber of success, but in their individual perceptions of having achieved serenity amid success. While this is not the forum for this discussion, in line with the above thought about focusing outward, some of the researcher's conclusions are apropos and vital.

Truly successful people are not involved only for themselves. Indeed, they make a point to celebrate other people's successes. [Step one, of course, is the acknowledgement that there are other people; it is not only about me.] Insecure people doubt their own relevance, thus they attempt to steal the spotlight and criticize others in order to prove their own value. Confident people are secure in their own relevance, because they tend to draw their self-worth from within – themselves. Instead of insecurely focusing inward, confident people focus outward, thus allowing themselves to see (and complement) all of the wonderful things that other people bring to the table.

Successful people live outside the box, outside their own comfort zones. They view their comfort zones as a sort of prison which restricts them from challenging the status quo and exposing themselves to new – and often – better ideas.

They keep an open mind. What purpose is there in exposing oneself to a variety of people and ideas, if it is only to argue and prove that "I" am right. On the contrary, they attempt to glean new ideas and approaches from others. They do not derive their sense of pleasure and satisfaction from comparing themselves to others. They measure their success with their own positive feelings concerning their own achievements. When they feel good about something, they will not allow someone else's negativity to spoil their good feeling.

Everything that I have cited can be found in our own *mussar sefarim*. As the *Mashgiach* said, our focus should be outwards, but only on a positive note. We want to learn from others, appreciate others and help others. By strengthening our *bein adam l'chaveiro* relationships, we also strengthen our relationship with Hashem. After all, that is our purpose on this world.