

The son of a Yisraelite woman went out and he was the son of an Egyptian man... and he pronounced the Name and he blasphemed. (24:10,11)

The story of this Jew who committed the abhorrent sin of blasphemy, is without a doubt a gut-wrenching tale whose placement in the Torah leaves one bewildered. It happened once – one person from a murky pedigree, the only one like him in all *Klal Yisrael*. His mother was the only immoral woman in the entire nation. He was the only Jewish man fathered by an Egyptian. His father was the one Egyptian that was killed by Moshe *Rabbeinu* to protect a Jewish man. *Rabbeinu Bachya* wonders why the Torah felt it necessary to include this tragic debacle in the Torah. It could have been a vital lesson for that generation, but why include it in the Torah?

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the Torah seeks to underscore the fact that no other Jew during the entire forty-year journey ever committed such a dastardly, atrocious sin. This man's sin was rooted in his tainted parental lineage, with both father and mother leaving much to be desired in the area of moral virtue. Furthermore, his blasphemy was premeditated and thought out, first pronouncing the Name and then following up with blasphemy. His punishment was swift and final. Likewise, when one blesses Hashem, he should think carefully what he is verbalizing and have the proper *kavanos*, intentions. This will incur great blessing for him.

Ruminating over the tragedy of the blasphemer, I wondered at first if he indeed has been judged too stringently. Having worked for years with prisoners of all genres and levels of transgression, I know that most have the "excuse" of a miserable childhood and all carry a huge chip on their shoulders. When we analyze the blasphemer's life, he, too, must have had a huge sense of combativeness that he carried around with him. He was the only male who had an Egyptian father and a mother whose moral profligacy was singular in a nation known for its modesty. Being one of a kind does not make for healthy relationships. So, it does not surprise us that he acted the way that he did. On the flipside, he was included in *Kabbolas HaTorah*, receiving the Torah together with the rest of the Jewish Nation. He was given a chance and certainly included whenever possible. In this instance, one person stood up to his moving his tent among the tribe of Dan. He lost it. Where was his gratitude for heretofore being included in every Jewish communal endeavor? Like all those who live with chips on their shoulders, he disregarded all of the positive influences and people who tried to help them throughout his life. Focusing on negativity usually ends in misfortune.