

Do not draw abomination for yourselves... you shall not make yourselves impure, therewith, and thus become impure. (11:43)

Chazal (Yoma 39a) teach, "Sin stupefies the heart of a person who commits it." This is noted from the *pasuk*, "Do not impurify yourselves with them, so you not be thereby impurified." Do not read it as *v'nitmeisem*, and you will become impure. Rather, read it *v'nitamtem*, you will become stupefied/befuddled/confused. In Yiddish, we would translate it as *farshtupped*, stuffed up. He no longer has control over himself; his sinful behavior seriously alters his ability to think rationally. *Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl*, derives an important principle from here. When the Torah exhorts us *al tishaktzu*, do not draw abomination upon yourselves... it does not mean that an external spiritual layer (so to speak) of impurity will hover over us; rather, it will alter our intrinsic essence. We become a *shtick*, object, of *tumah*, spiritual impurity.

We see this phenomenon occurring when the infant Moshe *Rabbeinu* refused to nurse from an Egyptian woman. The mouth that would one day speak to the Almighty must remain pure. Egyptian women consumed all sorts of food – kosher and non-kosher. As a result, their essence changed. Just because these foods had no adverse effect on them does not mean that it would not have a serious spiritual effect on a Jew. We live by a different standard, because we are essentially different. The fact that this may come across as elitist does not change its reality. The truth is the truth.

Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zl, Kamenitzer Rosh Yeshivah, was once walking with a group of close students during the summer as they conversed in Torah. They came to a certain place when the *Rosh Yeshivah* exclaimed that he sensed a noxious odor emerging from the area. He said, "We must immediately leave this area." They changed courses, and, when they reached their host's home, they discovered that in the immediate area where they had stopped, unbeknownst to the casual observer, was a church. It took the *Rosh Yeshivah's* spiritually sensitive sense of smell to notice that something was amiss.

Horav Yisrael Gustman, zl, related that following World War II, survivors, refugees from all over Europe, converged on Vilna, a city in which just about every *shul* had been destroyed. Every *shul* but one: the *shul* in which the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna* would *daven*. Every wall in the *shul* was damaged, with most of it gone, except the one wall on which was written: "This is the *shul* in which the *Gaon* would *daven*."

Rav Gustman, who was the unofficial Chief Rabbi of Vilna (having been a member of *Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski's bais din*), went out of his way to prepare the *shul*, so that it could serve as the place where all the refugees could congregate on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* to pour out their hearts to Hashem for what they had lost and pray for the future. Three thousand men crammed into the remnant of that *shul*. One can only begin to imagine the devotion, the tears, the

prayers of gratitude coupled with hope, that emanated from its environs. Then a shocking thing occurred. Immediately after *Yom Kippur*, whatever was left of that original edifice imploded and formed a huge crater. Why? How? No one could interpret what had just taken place.

Rav Gustman explained that during those High Holy Days following their liberation from the purgatory of the death camps, these broken shards of humanity needed a place to let it all out and pray with a passion and fervor unlike anything we could fathom. The *Gaon's shul* was the perfect place. Hashem kept it standing until after these Jews had expressed their emotion-laden *tefillos*. Then it collapsed. It had served its purpose.