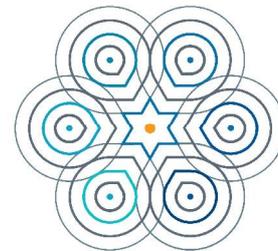


**Torah MiTzion** was established with the goal of strengthening Jewish communities around the globe. Over the past twenty two years Torah MiTzion's shlichim have inspired and enriched their host communities through a network of Religious Zionist Kollels. These Divrei Torah originally appeared in Torah Mitzion's weekly publication, **Shabbat MiTzion**



## Bringing Merit to the Public

by Rabbi Yisrael Shachor

Parshat R'ei deals with a number of topics. We will discuss one of them, namely the MEISIT (one who incites others to idol worship). Several important points emerge from an examination of the subject:

MEISIT is the only case where one receives the severest punishment - i.e., s'kila (death by stoning) - even if he was ultimately unsuccessful. As Rambam rules (Hilchot Oveid Avodat Kochavim 5):

“One who is MEISIT someone from Yisrael - whether a man or a woman - receives s'kila, even if neither the inciter nor the one who was incited performs idolatry, simply because he instructed him to worship [idols].”

MEISIT is the only sin where if there are no witnesses and therefore the punishment cannot be administered, attempts are made to cause the perpetrator to repeat the sin in order that he may be punished. With respect to other sins, however, quite the opposite applies. For instance, there is a famous Gemara (Pesachim 113b) which states that if a single witness observed someone committing arayot, the witness may not testify in beit din. His testimony is considered to be worthless, because the pasuk says:

“One witness shall not rise up against any person for any iniquity or for any

sin.” (D'varim 19:15)

In fact, the Gemara reports that a certain man was given lashes for testifying without a second witness.

Yet, with respect to MEISIT, the Mishna states explicitly (Sanhedrin 67a):

“For all those who have committed capital offenses from the Torah, we do not lie in wait for them [entrap them] except for this one... If he said [his remarks] to one person, that person says, ‘I have friends who [also] desire this.’ And if [the MEISIT] is clever and [says that] he is unable to speak before them, witnesses are arranged for him behind a partition.”

This parsha includes the only pasuk in the Torah which contains five LAVIN (prohibitions):

“You shall not desire him, and you shall not listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, and you shall not have mercy upon him, and you shall not cover up for him” (D'varim 13:9).

The Rambam (Hilchot Avoda Zara 5:4) counts them as five distinct prohibitions and explains each one.

Nevertheless, even with respect to other sins, we do find that one who causes another to sin is punished severely. As the Gemara states (Yoma 87a):

“And whoever causes the public to sin will be given almost no opportunity to do teshuva (repentance)... so that he will not be in Gan Eden while his disciples are in Gehinom.”

Similarly, the famous Mishna in Pirkei Avot (5:21) states:

“Yeravam ben Nevat sinned and caused the public to sin; the public’s sin is attributed to him.”

Furthermore, there is a LAV in the Torah which prohibits one from causing his fellow to fail (Vayikra 19:14):

“You shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person.”

Also, see the Gemara (Bava Metzia 75) about borrowing and lending with interest. Finally, the Chafetz Chaim (in his introduction) includes those who speak and listen to lashon hara in this prohibition.

Elul, the month of T'shuva, is upon us. We must strive to avoid causing others to sin. In fact, according to Rashi (Yoma 86a), this is the essence of Chilul Hashem, which can be defined as sinning and causing others to sin.

Our actions can, chalila, serve as a negative role model - each person according to his own level. But we also have the ability to promote our good deeds and have them serve as a positive influence on others. As the Gemara (ibid) states:

“You shall love Hashem your God’ (D'varim 6:5) - that the name of Heaven shall become beloved through you.”

The Gemara (Yoma 87a) teaches us that:

“Whoever brings merit to the public, sin will not come to his hands... So that he will not be in Gehinom while his disciples are in Gan Eden.”

Of all Moshe Rabeinu’s virtues, the Mishna (Avot 5:21) emphasizes one of them:

“Moshe was meritorious and caused the public to be meritorious, so the public’s merit is attributed to him.”

Chazal say that a good attribute is immeasurably greater than a bad attribute. Thus, we have here a wonderful prescription for the month of Elul: bringing merit to the public. In other words, we must ensure that all our actions function as positive role models for all.

Hopefully, we will then merit to enjoy a t'shuva sh'laima and to cause HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s Name to become beloved throughout the world. 