

“...BUT WHEN YOU ENTERED, YOU DEFILED MY LAND, AND MADE MY HERITAGE AN ABOMINATION.” (YIRMIYAHU 2:7)

The seeds of its future destruction were sown

THE DEDICATION DAY OF THE FIRST BEIS HAMIKDASH was a day of ecstatic joy and inspiration for the Jewish people. Yet, regarding that very same day, the Gemara (Nidah 70b) applies the *pasuk* (Yirmiyahu 32:31), “For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and of My fury from the day that they built it until today.” Why? On that day, the Gemara explains, Shlomo HaMelech married Pharaoh’s daughter. In another Gemara (Shabbos 56b), Chazal teach us that on that same day the angel Gavriel placed a reed in the sea, around which mud gathered and grew to become the place where Rome was later founded. On the very day that the Jewish people celebrated the construction of the Beis HaMikdash, the seeds of its future destruction were sown.

We know that Shlomo’s marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter was in accordance with *halacha*. She converted properly (Yevamos 76a) and as the Gemara in Shabbos (ibid.) states, “Whoever says Shlomo sinned is mistaken.” The Radak (Melachim I 11:1) explains that Pharaoh’s daughter did not have any negative influence on Shlomo at the time of their marriage. Only some forty years later, in his old age, when he married many other foreign women, did any misdeed occur. (Even then, Shlomo himself did not sin; but since Shlomo, in the weakness of his old age, did not stop these women from worshipping idolatry, he is held responsible – at his great spiritual level and according to the Torah’s lofty standards – as if he transgressed himself.)

This was a day of historic spiritual accomplishment

This was a day of historic spiritual accomplishment, the consecration of the earthly abode of the *Shechina*, with unimaginable holiness and joy. It was the first of seven days of celebration, which included Yom Kippur, and superseded the fasting of that sacred day. In fact a Heavenly voice proclaimed to the people, who were concerned about having eaten on Yom Kippur: “You are all destined for the World-to-Come!” How could a slight misjudgment on Shlomo’s part, which was not an actual sin and only became a negative force more than three decades later, have turned this incredible day into one of Divine “anger and fury?” A small error in an overwhelming sea of *kedusha* and *simcha* for the Beis HaMikdash – how could that have laid the foundations for its destruction and all the bitter suffering of our centuries-long exile, which has included pogroms, Inquisitions, Holocaust, terror and bloodshed?

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The leaders of Klal Yisrael are not merely ceremonial figureheads. They are the heart and soul of our nation. We look to them for guidance, instruction and inspiration, not only from their teaching, but more importantly, from their example. Their acts of righteousness uplift and ennoble our entire people, but their indiscretions can wreak national spiritual destruction, reflected in physical terms, that may affect generations to come.

While few of us are leaders on a national level, we can all have an impact on other Jews in our own positions of leadership: on our families, our employees and even our neighbors. People are influenced by the example we set, and we can raise them, or lower them, with our seemingly “small” actions. May we appreciate the power and the responsibility we have, and affect our fellow Jews in a positive way that will bring them closer to Hashem, and ultimately, closer to the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash speedily in our days.