

Pirkei Avot 1:7

Translation

Nittai the Arbelite said: Keep far from an evil neighbor and do not associate with the wicked; and do not abandon belief in punishment.

Maimonides

Do not befriend the wicked through any type of the types of friendship or fellowship in order that you not learn from his deeds. In the introductory chapters we have explained that a man will learn vices in the company of the wicked. He said, when you sin, or you were to observe a sinner, do not trust and say that

the Lord, may He be blessed, will punish him only in The World To Come; rather, do not despair of being speedily avenged by Him for that sin.

נִתַּי הָאֲרֵבִלִי אֹמֵר : הֲרַחֵק
מִשָּׁכֵן רָע, וְאַל תִּתְחַבֵּר לְרָשָׁע,
וְאַל תִּתְיַאֵשׁ מִן הַפְּרָעוֹנוֹת :

Rav Chaim of Volozhin

(Translation: Chanoch Levi in *Ruach Chaim*)

Keep Far...: A bad neighbor is one who meticulously performs all the mitzvos that govern man's (sic) relationship with Hashem, but does not act properly with his fellowman (sic). A wicked person acts kindly to his fellowman, but neglects those mitzvos that govern his relationship with Hashem. Distance yourself from both these types, because their retribution will eventually come, and those who keep their company may suffer as well. Woe to a wicked man, woe his neighbor (Midrash, quoted in *Rashi, Bemidbar 3:29*). [Footnote: Once the forces of destruction are unleashed, they do not differentiate between a righteous man and a wicked man (*Bava Kamma 60a*). That is, once the Attribute of Justice is applied to a locale, it affects all the people in the vicinity, and even the righteous may suffer for their few sins.

Avot de Rabbi Natan

Keep Far From an Evil Neighbor: It's all the same, a neighbor in the house, a neighbor outside, a neighbor out in the field. It teaches that afflictions come on account of the sins of the wicked. The sins of the wicked causes the covering of the walls of the righteous. How is this so? A wall that separates from a wicked person and a righteous person. An affliction appears in the wicked person's house on the wall separating between him and the righteous person. It is found that the wall of the righteous will be covered in the sins of the

wicked. *Do Not Abandon Belief in Punishment*:

How is this so? At the time when a person sees that s/he is successful in his/her actions, s/he shouldn't say: It is on

account of my merit that God has given me my food and drink in this world and the principle will be for me in the World to Come. Rather s/he should say: Woe is me, perhaps God has only found sufficient merit to give to me food and drink in this world in order that I will be lost from the World to Come.

Reuven Bulka

Do Not Abandon Belief in Punishment: Do not associate the majority with the truth, and do not let the apparent happiness and prosperity of the cruel people detract from your own dedication to righteous behavior. For, in fact, there are two types of values, the values of the moment and ultimate values. The values of the moment relate to immediate gain, and are opportunistic, often insensitive and too often cruel. Ultimate values relate to ultimate truths, truths which are eternal in time and space, and whose eternity will vindicate the trials of the moment. Such futuristic orientation will help to counter the despair of the present.