

פרשת קרח is a unique פרשה in that it's hard for us to fathom how someone could have the חוצפה, not just חוצפה but real פנים, to stand up against משה רבינו. There's a famous saying in English: familiarity breeds contempt. When you're sitting next to משה, living with him, learning with him, and doing things alongside him, you can start to believe you're his equal, or that you have some שייכות to his level. But of course, משה רבינו was far beyond anyone who ever lived, certainly beyond even those in his own generation. There are many lessons to be learned from this. First and foremost is the importance of giving כבוד התורה. No matter who we are and no matter who we're speaking to, we must give proper respect to every person we deal with. We give them כבוד for two reasons: A) for their level of קדושה and the accomplishments they've achieved, and B) even if we don't know what they've done, we still owe them the basic dignity and respect due to each person. This is part and parcel of הכרת הטוב, to be מכיר people who have done things for us.

Another core מידה that is tied to this is being זכות. דן. After the momentous incident where קרח and his עדה were swallowed up, and those who brought the קטורת were consumed by fire, כלל ישראל turned to משה and said, "We're all going to die because of the קדושה of the משכן." Moshe immediately realized that their complaint would raise a difficulty in שמים, and indeed, a מגפה began to spread.. He instructed אהרן the הכהן at the end of the פרשה to run and bring קטורת, and אהרן did so. (17:13) וַיַּעַמְד בֵּין הַמָּתִים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וַתַּעֲצֹר הַמִּגָּפָה (17:13).

Because he brought the קטורת, which has a life-saving property, opposite of what the people thought, that the קטורת was a life-ending property, אהרן was able to successfully stop the מגפה. And then the פסוק says, וַיָּשָׁב אֶהֱרֹן אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהַמִּגָּפָה נִעְצְרָה - Aaron returned to משה and the מגפה was over. R' Chaim Kanievsky זצ"ל cited a מדרש לקח טוב which states that after the מגפה was stopped, אהרן quickly ran back to משה רבינו, to report back and give the good news to משה. He understood that just as it was necessary to notify משה about the מגפה in order to help stop it, it was equally important to return and report that it had ended. On many occasions, people turn to a צדיק to daven for them, to give some זכויות, so that their תפילות should reach Hashem and help them and bring about a ישועה. But once the ישועה comes, it's really a חייב on them to come back and share the good news. The Chazon Ish זצ"ל and R' Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל both said that people would come and inform them of their problems but would not inform them when their problems were resolved. We learn from this small, almost incidental point in the פרשה just how ויכטיג הכרת הטוב is, that the תורה goes out of its way to tell us that אהרן went back to משה to report the good news.

During President Ronald Reagan's administration, several space shuttle missions were launched. One of them, the Challenger, was especially notable because it would not only transport astronauts but would also carry the first American teacher into space. There was fierce competition among educators across the country for that spot. One of the finalists was a Jewish teacher at a day school, but ultimately she was not chosen. Another teacher was given the honor. On January 28, 1986, the world watched as the Challenger launched. Just 73 seconds into the flight, it exploded, killing everyone on board. It was a horrific national tragedy. The Jewish teacher who had almost been selected received many messages afterward, all saying how lucky she was that she hadn't been chosen. One day, as she was walking down the hall in her school, a student known to be rowdy and mischievous said to her, "I wish you had been on the Challenger shuttle." The teacher froze. How could anyone say something so cruel, so horrific? Her mind was racing - how to respond, how to reprimand such a horrible comment - when the boy added, "I wish you had been on it, because you're such a good teacher that if you were on it, Hashem wouldn't have let the shuttle explode."

We always need to be זכות. דן. No matter how bad something seems, no matter how harsh or shocking, we have to dig deeper and assume the best, not the worst. It's not always easy. Sometimes it's extremely hard. But in the זכות of being זכות, דן, לכף זכות, may Hashem זכות us דן. לכף זכות. May we have a גוט געזונט זומער, and may we hear only טובות בשורות.

