

The Torah tells us that the people thirsted for water and complained to Moses and Aaron. Gd told Moses to take his ubiquitous rod and speak to the rock so that it would give forth water for the people to drink. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses hits the rock twice after which water flowed and the people drank. Gd's immediately punished Moses and Aaron by denying them entry to the Promised Land. Their sin: *יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל*, because you did not demonstrate faith in Me to sanctify Me before the Jewish People. Why does Gd mention the lack of faith? Why not simply say they were punished because they did not listen to Gd's specific directions to sanctify Gd's name? Also, wasn't the fact that they brought water forth from a stone a great miracle regardless how it was performed? Did it not inspire awe and fear of Gd among the people? What was so egregious about Moses and Aaron's actions that they were punished so severely? Would not the spectacle of extracting water from a rock be sufficient cause for the people to acknowledge the miracle performed on their behalf and lead them to sanctify Gd's name?

Having witnessed the hand of Gd through the plagues brought upon Egypt, the Exodus itself and the events at the Reed Sea, the Jewish People were impressed by the enormity of the miraculous events that saved them. Indeed, even Pharaoh and the Egyptians grudgingly acknowledged Gd's greatness. The entire world was gripped with awe and fear when the Reed Sea was split and the Jews safely passed through while their Egyptian oppressors and pursuers were drowned in it. *שמעו עמים ירגזון חיל אחז יושבי פלשת*. The magnitude of the miracles made it clear they were brought about by the hand of Gd. Moses proclaimed to the people that the miracle they were about to see at the Reed Sea was so great that they should just watch how the Egyptians will be dispatched, never to haunt them again. When the unique miracle occurred, it was obvious to them that the hand of Gd intervened on their behalf. The people acknowledged these miracles with an act of faith, spontaneously praising Gd, reciting *אז ישיר*.

Shortly after the events at the Reed Sea, the congregation gathered around Moses asking for water. Gd directs him to strike the rock so that water would flow. Moses prefaced the act by telling the people of the impending miracle. When the promised miracle occurred, the people were forced to recognize the hand of Gd yet again. A similar format of announcing the pending miracle to the people was used

in other cases such as the Mana and Slav. In the Korach incident, Moses promised the people would know that Gd sent him if the unique miracle occurs where the ground swallowed the transgressors. In that case the people would be forced to acknowledge His greatness.

Nadav and Avihu died when they brought a foreign fire at the dedication of the Tabernacle. Gd told Moses that His name will be sanctified, בקרובי אקדש. The intention was for the sacrifice on the altar and the incense to be consumed by heavenly fire thus affording another opportunity for the people to sanctify Gd's name, קדוש ד'. By bringing the foreign fire, they diminished the greatness and uniqueness of the miracle of the dedication of the Tabernacle, חנוכת המזבח. However, Gd's name will be sanctified no matter what. If not through the dedication of the Tabernacle, then through the unique way they died.

When the people demanded water, another opportunity to sanctify Gd's name presented itself. Gd told Moses to speak to the rock. What would have been wrong with hitting the rock? The miracle of hitting the rock, and the associated sanctification of Gd's name, had been performed 38 years before. Gd wanted to create a unique miracle that would again foster an automatic sanctification and recognition of the greatness of Gd – קדוש השם. Since the miracle of striking the rock to bring forth water was already seen by the people, performing it a second time would not be so amazing. Indeed, it would open up questions in the people's mind about the nature of the events they witnessed 38 years before. Perhaps Moses has a magical talent in knowing how to strike rocks to extract water from them. in retrospect, it was Moses and not Gd who performed the original miracle in Refidim. If the miracle can be attributed to human action and not a miracle by Gd, the name of Gd is diminished, not sanctified. This approach sheds light on why Nadav and Avihu's act to bring a non-heavenly fire was so egregious. By bringing a foreign fire, it created doubt regarding the magnitude of the miracle that Gd performed. The gap in the magnitude of the קדוש ד' had to be filled through their unique form of death and the recognition by all of their action and associated punishment. וירא כל העם וירונו ויפלו על פניהם.

By speaking to the rock instead of striking it, Moses had an opportunity to sanctify Gd's name again through a unique, never before seen miracle that would have engendered a great sanctification of Gd's name. By striking the rock, potential sanctification of Gd's name was diminished as it reenacted a miracle they were already familiar with. Gd tells them that they did not sanctify His name. The Torah concludes the story *המה מי מרובה אשר רבו במי ישראל את משה ויקדש בם*. Like the story of Nadav and Avihu, Gd's name was sanctified through them, meaning the punishment given to Moses and Aaron. The gap in the associated *קדוש ד'* had to be compensated for based on *בקרובי אקדש*, with their being denied entry to Eretz Yisrael.

Let us now address the second question we raised. Why did Gd charge Moses and Aaron with a lack of faith in connection with the *מריבה מי* incident? If there was a diminution of the Sanctity of Gd's name due to their action, how did that evidence a lack of faith on their part? The Biblical Commentators disagree regarding what was Moses' sin that denied him entry to the Promised Land. According to some, the incident at *מריבה מי* was the decisive offense. According to others, it was Moses' sending the spies. Yet others say it was his skepticism of the ability of Gd to provide meat for the entire congregation in Parshat Bhalotcha. The Gemara (Yoma 86b) says that Moses requested that his sin be publicized. Gd agreed with Moses and the Torah records his sin as *להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל*. Apparently the Gemara is very clear as to Moses' sin that denied him entry to the Land of Israel. Why is there such a difference of opinion among the Commentators if the reason is explicitly stated?

To answer this question, we must go back to the beginning of Moses' role as Gd's emissary to free the Jewish People from their Egyptian bondage. Upon meeting with Pharaoh's resistance to release the people immediately after Moses presented Gd's demand, Moses expressed doubt about his mission and his fitness for the role of redeemer. Gd replied that he, Moses, will witness their release from Egypt. Rashi quotes the Midrash that Gd said that he would witness their exodus from Egypt but would not witness their conquest of the 31 kings of the land of Canaan. The Torah continues to compare Moses with the patriarchs. Rashi comments that Gd chastised Moses by comparing him to Abraham who was promised a son and children as many as the stars in the sky and grains of sand on the beach. After

finally having that child, he immediately responded affirmatively when asked by Gd to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. It is interesting to note that there is a second incident that occurred immediately after being informed that he will have children. Gd promised Abraham the lands of Canaan as an eternal inheritance for his children, the *ברית בין הבתרים*. If we are looking for incidents where Abraham listened to Gd, why doesn't Rashi cite that incident as well?

In connection with being informed about his offspring, the Torah says 'והאמין בד' ויחשבה לו צדקה. Abraham demonstrated faith in Gd. No such statement is made regarding the *ברית בין הבתרים*. Our Rabbis tell us that indeed Abraham was punished for his lack of faith in Gd's promise to give his children the land forever and asking for a guarantee that he and they would inherit the land. The requirement to spend hundreds of years in servitude to the Egyptians was punishment for Abraham's request of the guarantee. The Midrash and Rashi tell us that Abraham demonstrated absolute faith in Gd regarding the children he would have. That is worthy of comparison with Moses' attitude. However his request for a guarantee that his children would inherit the land did not demonstrate absolute faith and for that he was punished. Already from the beginning of his role as Gd's emissary, Moses was in danger of being denied entry to the Promised Land for the cardinal sin of lacking complete faith in Gd.

Fast forward to the second year in the desert. The people are preparing for their epic march into the land which they would conquer with nary a battle. Suddenly the people complain about their rations and Moses approaches Gd about their complaint. Moses was skeptical when he was told Gd will provide a 30 day supply of meat to the people. He asked how can Gd provide so much meat? Even if they would slaughter all their cattle and collect all the fish in the sea, it could not approach the 30 day guarantee Gd gave him. Gd asks Moses, *היד ד' תקצר*, is Gd limited in any way when it comes to fulfilling His promises? Gd is saying, *כביכול*, Moses, this is the second time you have doubted me and displayed a lack of faith in My ability to fulfill My promises.

Fast forward again to the story of the spies. Rashi quotes the Midrash that Gd did not order Moses to send spies. He promised Moses and the people that the land

was beautiful and good. Gd said He will not prevent Moses from sending the spies, but he should beware, for the incident will not end well. Despite being told by Gd Himself about the beauty of the land, Moses acquiesced to the people's demand and sent the spies. Gd punished the generation that sent the spies, condemning them to wander the desert for 38 years until they all died. Their children will ultimately inherit the land. Again, the sin was precipitated by a lack of faith in Gd's promise regarding the beauty of the land. Some Commentators attribute Moses' punishment to this sin (see Abarbanel). The areas Moses asked them to investigate and report on, regarding the beauty of the land and the best way to approach it to facilitate ease of conquest, seemed to negate and diminish the very guarantees Gd gave him and the people regarding the land. If Gd would be fighting on their behalf, what need was there for a strategic assessment of the possible invasion paths? Sending the spies despite Gd's assurance that the land was good and answering the very questions Moses charged the spies with answering, was essentially a lack of faith.

Finally, at the conclusion of the 38 year death march, when the last of the doomed generation had passed on, the people were ready to enter the Promised Land. Again, Moses was tested with a situation that demanded complete faith and trust in Gd's specific commands in order to quench the people's thirst. Again Moses fails the test and he has exhausted his chances. He was granted clemency or a stay of execution the first 3 times he demonstrated a lack of faith. However the fourth one was unforgivable and he was severely punished for it.

The Commentators undoubtedly agree with the Gemara that the underlying cause in each of these situations noted above was Moses demonstrating a lack of or incomplete faith in Gd's words and promise. They disagree as to which was the most egregious event that ultimately cost Moses his opportunity to enter the Land of Israel. In all cases that lack of faith resulted in a sub-optimal sanctification of Gd's name.

Many ask, if Moses sinned by hitting the rock, why was Aaron punished? Perhaps because Aaron and Moses were inseparable. Both were charged with the mission of leading the people from Egypt. Aaron was at Moses side in each of the

situations cited above. He never protested Moses' words or actions or advised him to act differently. As co-leaders of the people, they shared the same unfortunate fate.

We now understand why the Gemara says that Moses' sin was **יען לא האמנתם בי** להקדישני. As great as they were, their actions conveyed a punishable lack of faith in Gd, at least for those at the level of Moses and Aaron. In the act of punishing Moses and Aaron, just as was the case with Nadav and Avihu, Gd's name was sanctified, **ויקדש בם**.

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