



## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

#### פרשת חקת

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. קַח אֶת הַמַּטֶּה וְהִקְהֵל אֶת הָעֵדָה אֹתָהּ וְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ, וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל הַסֶּלַע לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְנָתַן מִיְמֵיו, וְהוֹצֵאתָ לָהֶם מַיִם מִן הַסֶּלַע וְהִשְׁקִיתָ אֶת הָעֵדָה וְאֶת בְּעִירָם וְכו'. וַיִּקְהֲלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת הָעֵדָה אֶל פְּנֵי הַסֶּלַע, וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם שְׁמַעוּ נָא הַמְרִים וְכו'. וַיֹּרֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת הַסֶּלַע בְּמַטְהוֹ פַּעַמִּים וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם רַבִּים וְכו'. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן, יֵעַן לֹא הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לָכֵן לֹא תָבִיאוּ אֶת הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם.

*Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, "Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your brother, and you shall speak to the rock before their eyes and it shall give its waters. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the assembly and their animals." Moshe and Aharon gathered the congregation before the rock and he said to them, "Listen now, O rebels, ..." Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice; abundant water came forth ... Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of Klal Yisroel, therefore, you will not bring this congregation to the Land that I have given them."*

(Bamidbar 20:7-12)

This week's *Sidrah* recounts the events following the death of Miriam, during which Klal Yisroel experienced a shortage of water. In their distress, they complained to Moshe and Aharon. Hashem instructed Moshe to speak to the rock, which would then provide water for the nation to drink. Moshe, accompanied by Aharon, gathered the entire assembly and successfully drew water from the rock. However, Moshe did not honour Hashem as he was commanded, at least not in the manner or to the extent required. The exact nature of his transgression is puzzling and is interpreted in various ways by the Meforshim. Regardless of the interpretations, this sin ultimately prevented both Moshe and Aharon from entering Eretz Yisroel with the rest of the nation.

The Rambam (*Shemoneh Perakim* 4) explains that Moshe's sin was his anger towards the nation, as indicated by his words: *שְׁמַעוּ נָא הַמְרִים*, *Listen now, O Rebels*. Moshe acted out of anger, even though he had not been commanded to do so. Given Moshe's elevated *madreigah*, this behaviour resulted in a *חילול ה'*, since the nation observed his every movement and word, expecting him to demonstrate perfect behaviour and conduct.

The *possuk* further in the *parshah* (ibid. 24) states: *עַל אֲשֶׁר מָרִיתֶם אֶת פִּי לִמִּי מְרִיבָה*, *because you defied My word at the waters of strife*. The Rambam explains that Moshe was under intense scrutiny from the nation, which was on an elevated spiritual level, as Chazal teach that the lowliest individual among them was equivalent to the great prophet Yechezkel ben Buzi. Consequently, those who observed Moshe's behaviour did not suspect him of acting out of bad character traits. Instead, they assumed that if Moshe was angry, it must have reflected Hashem's anger towards the people. However, since Hashem was not angry with them, Moshe's words, spoken in anger, did not represent Hashem's intent. Rather, they expressed Moshe's personal feelings towards the people and consequently led to a profanation of Hashem's "mouth."

However, Rashi's view, based on the Midrash, is that Moshe sinned in striking the rock, rather than speaking to it, as he had been commanded. This action diminished the great miracle of Hashem providing water for Klal Yisroel. The Meforshim raise a question: the explanation of the Rambam (which is rooted in the Midrash Shir HaShirim) seemingly contradicts Rashi's interpretation. Furthermore, according to the Rambam, Moshe's sin stemmed from his misplaced anger. If so, in what way did Moshe's actions cause a lack of Kiddush Shem Shamayim regarding the manner of bringing forth water from the rock?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* cites R' Elyah Lopian *zatzal*, who explained that the interpretations of Rashi and the Rambam complement each other. Indeed, as stated by the Rambam, the fundamental sin was that Moshe became angry when he should not have been. However, this anger prevented Moshe from speaking to the rock to make it bring forth water, compelling him to strike it instead. Moshe's words would only have had power if they were words of נְבוּאָה, and as Chazal (*Pesachim* 66b) teach, anger causes one to lose their prophetic ability. Thus, his misplaced anger led to a loss of prophecy, resulting in the need to strike the rock rather than to speak to it.

In practical terms, as Rashi points out, the flaw was that Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it, which minimised the potential Kiddush Hashem that could have arisen from the greater miracle of water being produced by the rock solely through his words. However, the root cause, as noted by the Rambam, was Moshe's misplaced anger.

The Rosh Yeshiva elaborates on this concept further with a profound insight from the Ibn Ezra. He writes that when a person fully binds himself to Hashem, this connection grants him the power to perform miracles and wonders. This was meant to apply to Moshe, who could have brought forth water from the rock through his speech. However, due to his quarrel with the people and the subsequent anger, Moshe lost this complete closeness to Hashem and, as a result, lost his ability to perform miracles.

The Toras Chaim (*Bava Metzia* 59b) similarly explains the concept found in Chazal of the great Tanaim and Amoraim having the power to punish others simply by gazing at them. He asserts that the *neshamah* of a complete *tzaddik* is entirely bound to Hashem, allowing them to act as a conduit for Heavenly influence. This explains why the Nevi'im were able to perform miracles; due to their intimate closeness to Hashem, they could act as His agents and accomplish extraordinary feats. Moshe was meant to have this same power. However, his anger disrupted his connection to Hashem. As a result, he was not acting as an emissary of Hashem when he first struck the rock, which is why he could not extract water. Once Moshe realised the cause of his disconnection and became calm again, his closeness to Hashem was restored, allowing the water to flow forth after he struck the rock a second time.

We learn here the profound connection that the *tzaddik* who devotes himself to Hashem possesses. The *tzaddik* has the power to influence nature since he becomes, in a sense, an extension of Hashem and can perform miracles!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל עה"ת and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to [parshasheet@gyalumni.org](mailto:parshasheet@gyalumni.org).