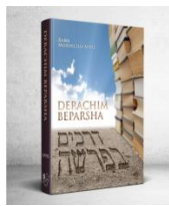


# דרכים בפרשה חקת-בלק

R' Mordechai Appel, an  
alumnus of Yeshivas Mir  
Yerushalayim, is the  
author of DERACHIM  
BEPARSHA.



וירם משה את ידו ויך את הסלע (כ"יא)

## And Moshe lifted up his hand and hit the rock (20:11)

Moshe was told by HaShem to speak to the rock, which would then bring forth water for the entire nation. According to Rashi, the fact that Moshe hit the rock rather than just speaking to it was the sin that prevented Moshe from entering Eretz Yisroel (c.f. Rambam- The sin of Moshe was that he got angry at the Bnai Yisroel and called them *Morim*).

The term *eved Hashem* is the appellation by which Moshe Rabbeinu is identified. The definition of an *eved* is one that follows instructions exactly as they are given. There is no room for the *eved* to deviate one iota! This can be summed up with a *passuk* in the Torah: " ויעש משה ככל אשר צוה ה' אתו כן - עשה - and Moshe did all that HaShem had commanded him, so he did (Shmos 40:16)". Accordingly, the meforshim ask: How could Moshe possibly commit such a sin? Wasn't he aware that he was violating a direct command of HaShem?

The Chidushei Harim answers that Moshe demonstrated the greatest understanding of what is expected of a leader. Moshe was worried that if upon speaking to the rock water would come forth, a great *kitrug* would present itself upon Klal Yisroel; a rock listens to instructions from Moshe but Klal Yisroel doesn't?! So Moshe hit the rock, "taking one for the team" to avoid any claims against *his* people. As a true leader of Klal Yisroel, Moshe was willing to deviate from his task at all costs, in order to protect Klal Yisroel.

But what was really wrong with hitting the rock? Wasn't Moshe told at an earlier venue to hit a rock for water to come forth? Here as well, Moshe was instructed to take a stick with him when bringing forth water from the rock. Of what purpose was the stick if not for hitting the rock?

The Malbim offers a brilliant insight. The word *selah* is used in this *parsha*, whereas in the previous incident, the Torah used the word *tzur*. *Selah* refers to a rock that is porous. The earlier incident in the Torah, of Moshe hitting the rock, was with a rock called a *tzur*; a smooth rock. Bringing forth water from a rock that is porous, although there is no possible way for it to contain so much water, is still a miracle that can be minimized somewhat. However, with the smooth *tzur*, there was no room at all for the naysayer to proclaim that water was already contained inside of the rock. Therefore, the complaint on Moshe was " יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישיני לעיני בני ישראל - you didn't cause them to believe in me". Had Moshe spoken to the rock, causing water to flow forth, this would have been the ultimate level of *kiddush HaShem*, but instead, Moshe brought forth a smaller miracle, thereby losing a golden opportunity.

Finally, the Nesivos Shalom answers our question from a different angle. Moshe understood from HaShem that the *tzivui* was to bring forth water. HaShem gave him two options to accomplish this feat: by hitting the rock (this explains why he had the stick with him), or by speaking to it. To hit the rock involved a physical effort, and although it is clearly a miracle, an action begets an action, so it is not viewed as a high level miracle. On the other hand, producing water from the rock merely by speaking to it is a miracle on a much greater level. It can be explained that the reason why Moshe

hit the rock was because he did not think that after the *chet ha-eigel* Klal Yisroel was worthy of the *nes* occurring on the higher level. Accordingly, Moshe's sin was that he underestimated the strength and greatness of the Jewish people.

We may not be asked to bring forth water from a rock or even to perform smaller miracles, but one thing we can for sure learn from here is to realize that we have tremendous abilities and we should never settle for less!

ויאמר אלקים אל בלעם לא תלך עמהם לא תאר את העם כי ברוך הוא (כב"ג) HaShem said to Bilaam "You shall not go with them! You shall not curse the people, for it is blessed!" (22:13)

After being told by HaShem that he cannot curse the Jews, Bilaam makes a final attempt and requests the privilege of giving them a *brocha*. HaShem responds that Klal Yisroel does not need the *brocha* of Bilaam because they are already blessed. Rashi quotes the famous *mashal* of a bee; *lo m'duvshaich velo m'uktzaich*- not from your honey and not from your stinger.

If we examine this *mashal*, there is a very poignant lesson that can be learned. There is a *halacha* that something that emanates from an impure animal is considered impure and therefore not kosher. It is for this reason that we have *halachos* regarding *chalav yisroel*- to insure that the milk is 100% from a kosher animal.

Although it comes as no surprise that a bee is not kosher, still and all, the honey is permissible to eat. The reason is because the bee is only the facilitator of the honey. In "*honey production 101*", we learn that when we see a bee buzzing around flowers, it is actually searching for sweet nectar to bring back to its hive. The next step is the flapping of their wings to cause the water within the nectar to evaporate. What remains is known as honey.

On the other hand, the stinger of the bee comes directly from within the bee itself. With its stinger, the bee can allow its own venom to penetrate into a person. This is the difference between matter that comes from within and matter that was only being "watched" by the bee, but did not actually belong to it.

The Vishiva Rav *zt"l* explains that Bilaam can be likened to the bee. The *brochos* that he dispenses do not come from within; rather, he is merely a carrier of Hashem's *brochos*. He can take no credit for them, as they are not his. However, his curses and wicked advice come from deep within, from his *koach hara*.

Therefore we tell Bilaam, *lo m'duvshaich velo m'uktzaich*. We have no interest in his *brochos*, as they come from HaShem, and Bilaam does not even have the power to affect them. Why shall we go through a middle man to receive them, if we can just go directly to HaShem? And surely, we don't want your curses that stem from your deep hatred of the Jews. We want nothing to do with you at all.

The message is clear: all *brocha* that we experience in this world comes from HaShem. There is no reason to go through alternate sources. Let us realize and internalize this and always remember to thank HaShem for the *brocha* that He continuously bestows upon us.

## Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפּעל

לז"נ מרת לאה בת ר' שלמה זלמן ע"ה

ט"ו תמוז תשפ"ב