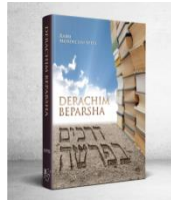


## דרכים בפרשה חקת

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### יֵאמֵר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן יֵעַן לֹא הֵאֲמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִכֵּן לֹא תִבְיֹאוּ אֶת הַקֶּהֱלָה הַזֶּה אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם

*“And Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, ‘Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the presence of Bnei Yisroel; therefore, you will not bring this congregation into the land that I have given them’” (20:12)*

Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon were punished in the *ma'aseh* of the *mei meriva*. The *pasuk* tells us that Hashem's disapprobation to them was that **יען לא האמנתם** – they could have brought about a *kiddush Hashem* by speaking to the rock, but instead they chose to hit the rock. As a result, they would not enter Eretz Yisroel. Rashi's commonly accepted explanation is that Moshe hit the rock when Hashem had instructed him to speak to it. The reason why Hashem specifically wanted him to speak to it was so that the Yidden would realize a *kal vachomer* – if even an inanimate object listens to the *dvar Hashem*, how much more so should they. The *hisorerus* would have been so strong, they would never have sinned again. But Moshe disobeyed Hashem and hit the rock, missing out on a great opportunity to sanctify and glorify Hashem's name.

The *seforim hakdoshim* explain that the reason this error was treated so severely was because it happened publicly, desecrating Hashem's name before the eyes of all of Klal Yisroel. This teaches us how seriously we should treat making a *chillul Hashem*.

The following question arises: wouldn't the same *kal vachomer* be learned from the fact that a spiritless, insentient rock, which has no *s'char v'onesh*, was hit to bring forth water, and it listened – so surely, we who have *s'char v'onesh* should listen as well? I heard the following answer from Rav Elya Svei *zt"l*: The lesson that could have potentially been learnt from speaking to the rock would have had a greater impact on them than the lesson from hitting. How so? Let's take disciplining a child for a *masal*. When a child listens just because he was asked, his behavior is on a more sincere level than that of a child who only follows his father's command after receiving a *potch*. Yes, Klal Yisroel wound up getting the message that they must heed the *d'var Hashem*, but the message could have been given over in a more efficient manner. It was the diminishing of the impact of the message that Moshe and Aharon were now being taken to task for.

We must recognize the severity of the consequences of this slight deviation – the fact that as a result, Moshe did not enter Eretz Yisroel. According to the Midrash, had Moshe entered, he would have built the Beis Hamikdash; it would have never been destroyed, and Klal Yisroel

would not have gone into exile in future generations. This small difference, that a slightly better lesson could have been taught, is called **לֹא קִדְשַׁתְּם אוֹתִי** – you have failed to sanctify My name, and the price would be paid for many generations to come.

Rav Elya then continued with a life-altering answer based on the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Chukas, 763). What was it that Moshe was supposed to tell the rock? **אל-הסלע-שנה עליו פרק אחד והוא מוציא מים מן הסלע** Hashem wanted Moshe to say words of Torah (these *pesukim*) to the rock, and through that the water would be brought forth. Accordingly, it follows that it wasn't just speaking to the rock that would have brought about a lesson to Klal Yisroel – but rather, the lesson would have been from the power of Torah learning. Had Moshe recited a *pasuk* and thereby caused the rock to respond, this would have left an indelible impression on the nation: that a *pasuk* in Chumash can literally transfigure reality. The *kal va'chomer* would then be: if a *pasuk* can change a lifeless, solid rock, then it can surely alter a human of flesh, blood and soul.

The Gemara in Brachos (28a) tells us that when Rabban Gamliel was the Rosh Yeshiva, he only accepted students that were **תוכם כבדם** (those whose inner character matched their public demeanor). In a turn of events, as a result of his dispute with R' Yehoshua, he lost his position, and the mantle of leadership was passed on to Rabi Elazar Ben Azaria – and along with the new Rosh Yeshiva came new entrance policies. It was now easier than ever to be accepted into the yeshiva; any student that had an interest in learning Torah was granted entry. On that first day alone, between 400 and 700 new benches were added to accommodate the new students. (Maseches Ediyos was one of the by-products of this policy change.) When Rabban Gamliel saw all the new *talmidim*, he had significant qualms; he wondered whether due to his closed-door policy, he had withheld Torah from Klal Yisroel.

The Chidushei HaRim raises a question regarding Rabban Gamliel's concern. His goal was to run an institution of the highest caliber; he tested these students and felt that they did not make the grade. *Lehavdil*, if the dean of Harvard University were to pass by a bustling community college which is double the size of his own, he wouldn't, even for a moment, have remorse, thinking that he could have had all those students. So why did Rabban Gamliel suddenly feel compunctions over his preferred policy?

The Chidushei HaRim answers that at first, the former Rosh Yeshiva did not regret his actions. With time though, he noticed that the more the students were exposed to the Torah, the more their bad character traits fell away. The Torah was transforming their nature. Gradually, they too became **תוכם כבדם**. Rabban Gamliel felt bad that he never gave them the chance. Although we definitely do not start out as **תוכו כבדו**, allowing the Torah into our systems can get us there, as long as we give it the chance to penetrate us!

**מרדכי אפּפּעל, Good Shabbos,**