

## **Parshas Chukas- The Failed Kiddush Hashem and Moshe's Fate Not to Enter Eretz Yisroel Sealed**

*by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh*

In Bamidbar 20:1-13 we read of the events that sealed Moshe Rabbbinu's fate not to enter Eretz Yisroel .The forty years are up and Am Yisroel is ready to enter Eretz Yisroel. Moshe was not to enter. While there have been events that hinted at this a number of times in the Torah, the events of this Parsha made it certain. One such hint was when (Shemos 6:1) when after Moshe goes to Paroh and does not achieve any of the desired results and complains to Hashem about it, Hashem tell him, "Now you will see what I will do to Paroh." Rashi quotes Chazal stating now you will see what I will do to Paroh but you will not see what will happen to the thirty-one kings in the land of Canaan. It seems Moshe expressed doubt at what Hashem will do. However, this conversation, as well as others that the Torah records, were held in private. Therefore, Hashem could not punish Moshe publicly for something expressed in private. There had to be an event in public that would seal his fate.

We are first told of Miriam's passing. Chazal tell us that Am Yisroel had water in the desert in Miriam's merit. Now that she had passed on, so too, did the special well disappear. Am Yisroel started to complain over the lack of water. Hashem told Moshe to gather the people together and speak to a specific rock and that the rock would give forth water.

Most of us are familiar with Rashi's explanation of what took place. Moshe should have merely spoken to the rock and water would have come forth. Moshe hit the rock instead. Some say he was talking to the wrong rock but hit the right rock. In any event, it would have been a much bigger Kiddush Hashem if the water would have come forth only from Moshe's talking to the rock instead of hitting it. Everyone present would have been marveled at how a rock which is not commanded to obey Hashem and receives no reward or punishment gives forth water when ordered. They

would have realized how much more so we have to obey Hashem. Hitting the rock would never bring about such an effect.

The above is the how Ramban understands Rashi. He also quote's Rambam who claims that Moshe's wrongdoing was his phrase of, "Listen you rebellious people." Even Moshe Rabbeinu should have maintained his cool at this time. The Ramban then dismisses the Rambam's idea because the Torah indicates the sin was a lack of Kiddush Hashem and Moshe's anger. He then brings Rabbeinu Chananel who understands Moshe's sin as stating: "Will WE bring forth water from this rock, attributing the power to themselves and not to Hashem alone. The Mashgiach, Rav Michel Barenbaum, Zt"l, brings this Ramban in a Mussar shmuz to show how careful we have to be in every word we say and the exact way we do things to bring about a kiddush Hashem and how the fates of Aharon and Moshe were affected by mere phraseology

The Kedushas Levi synthesizes Rashi and Ramban. He states there are two approaches to rebuke. The first is to stress the greatness of Am Yisroele's lofty neshamos and how every mitzvah Am Yisroel does makes an impact on all the worlds. The second approach is hard, direct rebuke. The first approach raises Am Yisroel's level while the second is more forced or more superimposed improvement. Because Moshe said the words: "Listen You Rebellious people," he had to hit the rock. Had he spoken to the rock gently, he would have raised the entire level of Am Yisroel and they would have been given their water in a more gracious and glorified manner. We see from here the importance of trying to use the first approach to Mussar and thus elevate Am Yisroel in the Creation.