

# **SOURCE OF BLESSING IN ISRAELI LAND**

## **Parshas Chukas**

**By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach**

[A wish: Mr. Lapid and his group in the Israeli government read this essay, to make an impact upon, to cease the insistence that Yeshiva students close the Gemoros and join the army.]

In our Sidra we learn that during the forty years on their journey in the Midbar, the Israelites were supplied with water miraculously in the zechus (merit) of Miriam. As they reached the month of Nisan of the fortieth year, Miriam died, and there was no water (Bamidbar 20:1). We learn from the juxtaposition of her death and the lack of water, that all these forty years journeying in the midbar the water was supplied miraculously in the merit of Miriam (Rashi ibid). According to the Talmud the water reappeared after a few days, in the zechus, merit of Moshe and Aaron. The Maharsho wonders since the merit of Moshe and Aaron was enough to provide water as it reappeared a few days after it ceased, why did the water flow cease for several days. It could have continued uninterrupted in the merit of Moshe and Aaron. Expounds the Maharsho, the temporary interruption of the water flow was essential in order for all to acknowledge the fact that until now the water was supplied in the merit of Miriam.

The gravity of this deprivation should not be underestimated. Several million people, including many children, bereft of water for several days is most distressing, painful. Yet, according to Maharsho it was worthwhile in order for all to feel profoundly that until now, while Miriam was alive, it was in her merit that Hashem provided water on parched land. "Take care lest you forget Hashem Your G-d... Who leads you through the great and awesome wilderness... and thirst where there was no water, Who brings forth water from the rock of flint" (Devorim 8:11,15). In this urgent care to remember Hashem's miracles, the Torah

obliges us to remember also the Tzidkonis in whose merit the blessing was provided.

BEAIR, well, for drink receives an extra measure of appreciation, as the Torah in our Sidra records a special SHIRA, called SHIRAS HABEAIR (21:17,20), song of the well.

In this context the perspicacious learner includes the decree that Moshe and Aaron would not enter Eretz Yisroel, the land they craved so profoundly to enter. As the Israelites found themselves suddenly without water, after the death of Miriam (ibid), Moshe was told to take the rod and gather the Israelites, V'DIBARTEM, and speak, in front of the rock, and the water will come forth from the rock and quench their thirst. Instead of speaking unto the rock, Moshe smote it with the rod. For this he and Aaron were deprived of the privilege to enter and bring the Israelites into the Holy Land (20:7-12).

The divine plan was that the water, which is the most basic need for the sustenance of life, would now come as a result of the study of Torah. Moshe was told to speak in front of the rock... Though V'DIBARTEM may refer to either prayer or Torah study (Netziv ibid.), the term is more applicable towards study of Torah: "Study with them a Perek in front of the rock" (Yalkut Chukas 764; see Ohr Hachayim who insists that the intent was to study Torah at the rock). This was to impress upon the mind, for all time, what power is hidden in Torah study, and what powerful method it is in gaining the Al-mighty's grace.

Moshe was therefore, to take the rod, but not to use it. This was vital and imperative as the Israelites were readying to enter the Land. Failing to perform this mission as prescribed, Moshe and Aaron were meted out retribution not to enter the Land, measure for measure.

"LOCHAIN" (therefore) you will not bring this Congregation to the Land..." (20:12). The word "LOCHAIN" is a form of an oath (Rashi ibid). An oath is the most serious insistence on the sincerity of the "word". Indicative in this oath is the real reason they could not enter the Land. It was the lack of the "Torah word" which is the life breath of the Land.

The question arises why is this refusal to allow them to enter repeated several times. In addition to the above quoted LOCHAIN... it is repeated in connection with Aaron's death (20:24); again in Parshas Pinchas (27:14); again in Vaeschanan (Devorim 3:23-28). One conjectures in addition to state the decree to Moshe and Aaron, it was repeated to teach the Israelites that vital of the vitals, that Jewish power in the land is the power of the "word", the source of blessing, of survival, the word of Torah and prayer. "...which I took from the Land of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow" (Beraishis 48:22) "i.e. word of prayer and Torah word" (Unkeles, Rashi).

The question that must be addressed: why was Moshe to take the rod, since it is the Torah study, the "Vedibartem" in front of the rock, that is the crux upon which the success depends, entering the Land, why take the rod?

The obvious answer is fundamental and crucial in the confronting attitudes toward Torah study versus joining the army. At the utterly miraculous crossing the Yam Suf "within the sea on dry land" (Shemos 14:22), Israelites were told "Hashem will make war for you, and you shall remain silent" (14:14). However once in the Holy Land there are hosts of Mitzvochs that imply work, such as farming, building, etc. and includes also preparation, an army, in case of war (see Devorim 20:1-19). This is the meaning of the rod, which Moshe was not supposed to use. The keystone is the words of Torah. When this critical point is observed, victory over enemies, represented by the rod, is assured.

Moshe Dayan, a secularist (not his fault, since he was raised by secularists) during preparation for the Six Day War ('67), still retained somehow the "pintele Yid". Secularists, then, raised the issue of Yeshiva students joining the army. Dayan settled the case, saying (something like) "we need Heavenly miracles, let them study Torah". Moshe Dayan saw with one eye (the other patched). But he saw with clarity. The Lapid group, can they open both their eyes to see the truth?

