

Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim

Chukas 5775

The Tribe of Levi, a Higher Standard

Introduction

ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל לכן לא תביאו את HaShem, הקבל השה אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם, HaShem said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore you will not bring this congregation to the Land that I had given them." (Bamidbar 20:12) In this week's parasha we learn about how the Jewish People complained about the lack of water and HaShem instructed Moshe to take his stick and speak to the rock to draw forth water for the people. Moshe instead hit the rock, thus causing a desecration of HaShem's Name and forfeiting his privilege of entering into Eretz Yisroel. The Ibn Ezra and the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh cite many opinions regarding Moshe's sin. Some commentators posit that Moshe's sin was that he became angered with the Jewish People and for this reason HaShem punished him by not granting him entry into Eretz Yisroel. Other commentaries write that Moshe sinned because he disobeyed HaShem's commandment of speaking to the rock and instead he struck the rock and this was not the correct method for

producing water. There are also opinions that maintain that Moshe should only have hit the rock once and not twice. Many of the commentators cite the verse in Tehillim (106:32-33) where it is said vayakitzifu al mei merivah vayeira liMoshe baavuram ki himru es rucho vayivatei bisfasav, they provoked at the Waters of Strife and Moshe suffered because of them, because they acted contrary to His spirit, and He pronounced with His lips, as proof for their opinions. The Medrash (Shemos Rabbah) states that matters that Moshe did not explain fully were elaborated on by Dovid HaMelech in Tehillim. What message is Dovid HaMelech conveying to us with these words?

Are Miriam and Aharon different than Moshe?

Surprisingly, most of the commentaries seem to ignore an explicit verse in the Torah that sheds much light on the incident of Moshe deviating from HaShem's instructions. It is said (Devarim 33:8) uliLevi amar tumecha viurecha liish chasidecha asher nisiso bimassah tiriveihu al mei merivah, of Levi he said: Your Tumim and Your Urim benefit Your devout one, whom You tested at Massah, and whom You challenged at the waters of Merivah. Rashi writes something that at first appears to be very puzzling. Citing the

Sifri, Rashi writes that HaShem, so to speak, came upon Moshe with a libel. If Moshe uttered the words (Bamidbar 20:10) shimu na hamorim, listen now, O rebels, what did Aharon and Miriam do? The Sifri is perplexing, because it appears to be asking a rhetorical question. The explanation of the question at first glance seems to be as follows: “we understand what Moshe did wrong, and thus was deserving of a punishment, but Aharon and Miriam did not do anything, so why were they also punished?” This, however, is difficult to understand, because in this verse Moshe is blessing the tribe of Levi, so why would he publicly reprimand himself? Furthermore, how can it be that there is a libel against members of the tribe of Levi? Aharon was faulted for his involvement in the fashioning of the Golden Calf, and Miriam sinned by gossiping about Moshe. Why does the Sifri deem Moshe’s act at Mei merivah to be different?

The tribe of Levi is held to a higher standard

In order to gain a better understanding to what occurred at Mei merivah, we need to focus on the uniqueness of the tribe of Levi. The Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 5:16) states that Moshe told Pharaoh that every nation has spiritual leaders that guide the nation, and the Jewish People are no different. Pharaoh therefore allowed for one tribe to be exempt from the slavery, and that tribe was the tribe of Levi. Thus, while the entire Jewish People was enslaved to the Egyptians

and were bitterly persecuted, the tribe of Levi was free to do as they pleased. When Moshe was on his way to Egypt, he was required to circumcise his son, and his delay almost cost him his life. The reason for Moshe being liable the death penalty was not because he had delayed in the circumcision, as a father is not liable the death penalty for not circumcising his son. Rather, it would appear that Moshe was being held to a higher standard than other Jews, and HaShem deemed his delay to be a desecration of His name, which was only atoned for through death. Similarly, when Aharon abetted the fashioning of the Golden Calf, he may have violated a negative commandment of fashioning an idol, but the consequences could have been more severe, if Moshe had not interceded on his behalf. HaShem wished to punish Aharon by killing all of his sons, and Moshe’s prayers were effective to save two of them from death. Aharon, as a member of the tribe of Levi, was held accountable because his tribe was placed on a pedestal, and he did not conform to the high standard that his tribe exemplified. Similarly, Miriam gossiped about Moshe and was punished. What was it that was so serious about Miriam’s act? The Medrash states that Miriam questioned why Moshe was able to separate from his wife and other prophets were not required to do this. In truth, however, Moshe was from the tribe of Levi, and the tribe of Levi always went beyond the letter of the law. An example of their transcending the normal laws is from the

Gemara (Yevamos 72a) that states that while sojourning in the Wilderness, the Jewish People did not circumcise their children because they required the northern wind to blow to heal the wound. HaShem did not allow the northern wind to blow because the wind would have dispersed the Clouds of Glory. The tribe of Levi, however, put their lives at risk by leaving the clouds and circumcising their children. Thus, we see that the tribe of Levi went beyond the letter of the law to fulfill HaShem's will. Similarly, Moshe separated from his wife so he could always be connected to HaShem. This conduct was in line with the tribe of Levi always being separated for spiritual pursuits.

When Moshe deviated from his calling he was punished

We can now better understand what occurred regarding the Jewish People's complaint for water and why Moshe was punished so severely. The fact that the Jewish People requested water was not unique, as the Torah records other instances where they asked for water and HaShem provided for them. The uniqueness of this incident was that Miriam had just died, and the Gemara (Taanis 9a) states that it was in her merit that the Jewish People had the water source. When the Jewish People complained about the lack of water, HaShem decided to test Moshe and Aharon to see if they would go beyond the call of duty. Whereas in the past Moshe had used his staff to produce the

water, here HaShem desired that he should talk to the rock, thus transcending the laws of nature. Moshe did not fulfill HaShem's instructions to the letter, and it was for this reason that he was punished by not being granted entry into Eretz Yisroel. In truth there is a pattern to this action and reaction, as we see when Moshe complained to HaShem that by going to Pharaoh he had only made matters worse for the Jewish People. HaShem informed Moshe that he would see what He did to Pharaoh but he would not witness what HaShem would do to the gentile kings when the Jewish People entered Eretz Yisroel. Furthermore, in the Song of the Sea it is said (Shemos 15:16-17) *ad yaavor amchah HaShem am zu kanisa tivieimo visitaeimo bihar nachalascho*, until Your people passes through, HaShem – until this people You have acquired passes through. You will bring them and implant them.... Rashi writes that in this verse Moshe was prophesying that he would not enter Eretz Yisroel. Why did Moshe mention this prophecy in middle of the Song? The answer to this question is that after describing the Jewish People as the nation that HaShem acquired, Moshe alluded to his own future, as he was required as a member of the tribe of Levi to set the standard for everyone else. By failing to adhere to this standard, Moshe was punished. Thus, in his blessing for the tribe of Levi, Moshe was praising the tribe for their steadfastness in fulfilling HaShem's will. The subsequent verses testify to the tribe of Levi going beyond the call of

duty by punishing the sinners who were involved in worshipping the Golden Calf. The passage further alludes to the battle that the Chashmonaim waged against the Greeks. Similarly, Dovid HaMelech in Tehillim depicts a nation that provoked HaShem at Mei merivah, and Moshe suffered on their account. The words *ki himru es rucho*, because they acted contrary to his spirit, is interpreted by some of the commentators (see Radak and Ibn Ezra Ibid) to be referring to Moshe. We can therefore suggest that the verse is alluding to the idea that the Jewish People caused Moshe to act contrary to his calling as a member of the tribe of Levi. This deviation resulted in Moshe being punished for his sin.

The praises of Levi allude to the higher standard

We can now understand the words of the Sifri mentioned earlier. The Sifri not asking a rhetorical question. Rather, the Sifri is noting that Moshe sinned, and the Torah records his punishment. Regarding Aharon and Miriam, however, one would be led to think that their actions did not warrant a severe punishment of not being granted entry into Eretz Yisroel. The Torah therefore continues to describe the praise of the tribe of Levi, thus hinting to the idea that Aharon and Miriam, as members of that tribe, were also held to a higher standard.

The Shabbos Connection

The role of the tribe of Levi is to serve as spiritual guides for the Jewish People, and as the Rambam writes (end of laws of Shemitah and Yovel) every Jew is capable of aspiring to the level of the Levites. Throughout the week we may not be able to rise to these heights, as the burden of earning a livelihood weighs us down and we struggle to transcend the world of physicality. With the arrival of Shabbos, however, we are all given the opportunity to become connected to HaShem and His Torah. The word Levi means to become attached, and HaShem should allow us to attach ourselves to His Torah and to those who study it.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Yom Zeh LiYisroel

Some opinions attribute the authorship of this Zemer to the Arizal.

בְּשֵׁשֶׁת כְּלִיָּהּ מְלֵאכֶת עוֹלָמִים, in six You completed the labor of the universe. What is the significance of the number six? The word for six in Hebrew is שֵׁשׁ. The word for rejoice is שִׂשׂ (The letters ש and שׁ are interchangeable). The Gemara (Chulin 60a) states that were all of creation have been asked if they were satisfied with being created, they would have responded affirmatively. Thus, we see that that throughout the “six” days of creation, all of creation rejoiced in their having been created.

Shabbos Stories

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach the Husband

"Although it is customary to ask forgiveness from one who has died," R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said at his wife's funeral, "I shall not do so. Throughout our entire marriage we never offended or hurt one another. We conducted our lives according to the Shulchan Aruch, and I have no reason to ask her forgiveness."

The following is an example of R' Auerbach's exquisite sensitivity towards his wife combined with his exactitude in fulfilling the Shulchan Aruch. R' Yitzchak Yeruchem Borodiansky told this story in one of the eulogies during the shivah week.

Once, R' Shlomo Zalman's sister came to his house to ask about a certain bachur who was suggested as prospective match for her daughter. When she first entered the house, there were a few people waiting to speak to R' Shlomo Zalman. She waited until they left, and finally she was alone with R' Shlomo Zalman and his Rebbitzen. She asked him about the bachur, and he answered, "He's a fine boy."

When R' Shlomo Zalman's sister was about to leave, he asked her if she was planning on visiting their sister in Sharei Chessed before she went home and she answered in the affirmative. Later, when

she left the house of their sister, she found R' Shlomo Zalman waiting outside. He approached her and said, "Regarding the bachur, you should know that you should only ask about others in privacy." "But who was there?" she said. "The Rebbitzen was there," he said, "and she doesn't need to hear lashon hara." Then he told her, "Don't follow through with this shidduch. He's not for your daughter."

R' Shlomo Zalman felt responsible to convey the proper information to his sister, but he was so sensitive to his Rebbitzen's feelings that he didn't even want to ask her to leave the room. Instead, he used his precious time to meet his sister in another location, saving his wife from hearing lashon hara and from being insulted! (Source: The Man of Truth and Peace)

A Lawyer Meets His Match

A Rav in England had a friend who was a lawyer, and who knew very little about Yiddishkeit. Once, this lawyer approached the Rav with a very serious dilemma. He was currently defending a non-Jew who had become involved in criminal activities. This man was extremely cunning and deceitful, and the judge who saw right through his lies, decided to prosecute his lawyer as well, since he was a partner to the criminal's deceit. It is common practice in England that the judges can implicate the lawyers, to ensure that they do not become tainted by their clients' wrongdoings. This lawyer was in great danger of not only of losing his right to

practice his profession, but of also of receiving a heavy punishment and fine. The lawyer was anguished and worried, and at a loss of what to do. The Rav said to him, "Listen, my friend, the best advice I can give you is to do what all of Klal Yisrael does. Simply daven to the Ribbono shel Olam, and He'll save you from this tzara." The lawyer replied, "What! I should ask HaShem? It's not possible, and I'll tell you why. Once I already asked for help from Him, and I promised that I wouldn't ask for anything else."

The lawyer explained that few years prior, he traveled to Australia for work, and stayed there for six months. While in Australia, his only daughter, who was then seven years old, suddenly became critically ill. After many tests, it was determined that it was cancer, and she began treatment. Unfortunately, she did not respond well, and she grew sicker. One day, which happened to be Shabbos, the doctor told the lawyer that her situation is critical, and she has only a few hours to live. The distraught father decided immediately to find a shul. Despite his ignorance of Yiddishkeit, he remembered that when he became Bar Mitzvah, his father took him to shul. He searched for a shul, and eventually found one, which was unlocked. It was the middle of the day, and the shul was empty. He burst out crying and continued crying without a stop for two hours. Amidst his tears he said, "HaShem, I need to ask You something, and I promise You that I'll never ask for anything else. I ask of You that my

beloved daughter remain alive." Eventually, the lawyer felt a sense of relief, and returned to the hospital. He was greeted at the hospital with miraculous news - his daughter had opened her eyes. She began improving little by little, and eventually fully recovered. In fact, her new X-rays showed no sign of a cancerous growth at all, and even the doctors admitted that it was a complete miracle.

The lawyer finished speaking, "So, didn't you hear that I promised HaShem never to ask for anything else? How can I break my promise?"

The Rav said, "Your promise is not valid! HaShem is not a person. You can continue to request whatever you need from Him."

The lawyer followed his advice, and was declared innocent. (Shaal Avicha Veyegadcha) (www.Revach.net)

Shabbos in Halacha

לישה - Kneading

3. Permitted Methods of Kneading

2. שינוי בלישה – A Shinui in the Method of Kneading

After the ingredients have been combined, mixing or stirring them is itself an act of kneading. To stir the ingredients, therefore, one must mix them in an irregular manner. The {Poskim approve a number of permitted

methods. Here we will focus only on the practical methods.

a) **שתי וערב - Mixing With Crisscross Strokes**

One permitted method is to move [the fork or spoon] through the mixture in a crisscross fashion, changing direction with each stroke, rather than the commonly used method of continuous circular motion. When one mixes in this manner, it is preferable that one lift the fork or spoon out of the mixture with each change of direction.



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