

# SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF  
BNEI AKIVA UK  
THE MOST WIDELY  
DISTRIBUTED YOUTH TORAH  
PERIODICAL IN THE UK



PARASHAT CHUKAT | ISSUE 32

Adam Waters | Chief Operations Officer

In Judaism we know there is a concept that a specific sin leads to a specific punishment. For example, at the sin of the golden calf there were three punishments, and therefore there must have been three sins (idolatry with witnesses, idolatry with no witnesses, and adultery!) However, in this week's Parasha there seems to be an incident that goes against this logic.

Throughout their journeys in the wilderness Bnei Yisrael have complained about lack of food and water. In all of these instances the complaints of the people were responded to by giving them what they wanted. They wanted water, so Hashem provided water from a rock; they wanted food so Hashem provided manna, and so on. This week however, their complaints about the food and desert are met with serpents that kill off many of the complainants! Why the sudden change in punishment? What was so different this time?

The answer is that on all other occasions, the people complained about and to Moshe.

"And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (Exodus 15:24).

"The people quarreled with Moses, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished... There is not even water to drink" (Numbers 20:3,5).

In this case, they complained directly about Hashem: "The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why did you make us leave Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread and no water," (Numbers 21:4-5)

They were now not just complaining about a physical ailment, they were actively complaining against the direction Hashem was leading them in. They had just had the disappointment of not being able to

travel through Edom's land, and were now heading back into the desert. They had lost faith in Hashem, and were wavering in their belief. Some of Bnei Yisrael might even have completely gone against Hashem, effectively committing the same sin as at the golden calf, adultery. Death through plague therefore was the punishment.

However, there is still something extremely puzzling about this story. They had committed a similar mistake as with the Golden Calf (lack of faith and building an idol), and yet we read of how in our Parasha the 'cure' to their punishment was to build an idol! In fact, this serpents head was worshipped and ultimately destroyed in the time of Hezekiah, it was called Nechushtan. (Kings II 18:3-4)

The answer to this conundrum is that the serpent was not the cure, rather it was a tool to encourage the people to 'raise their eyes to heaven' and come back to trusting Hashem. How did a serpent idol do this? Some commentators say it was because it was raised, and therefore Bnei Yisrael had to 'look up'. I prefer the explanation of Ramban: When someone is bitten by a poisonous animal, seeing that animal again can cause incredible pain and even a worsening of their condition. By making Bnei Yisrael look at this dangerous animal, they were reminded of the protection Hashem had previously given them against the desert's animals, and also of the miraculous nature of the cure. Something that should have made them worse, actually made them better. They understood that Hashem holds the power of life and death, and this reignited their faith in Hashem. Sometimes we need to see our real enemies, to appreciate the protection and strength Hashem gives us.

# The Mistake of Moshe and Aharon

.....

Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

In this week's parsha, we read of the Divine decree that Moshe and Aharon will not enter the land, due to their sin in Mei Meriva (Bamidbar 20:7-13). This decree is followed fairly closely by the beginning of its fulfillment, with the death of Aharon (20:22-29). What was it that Moshe and Aharon did that caused them to not be able to see their mission to fulfillment and bring Bnei Yisrael into the land of Canaan?

We must take a closer look at the pesukim to understand. After explaining that Bnei Yisrael complained due to a lack of water, the Torah tells us (20:7-13):

And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, "You and your brother Aharon take the staff and assemble the community, and before their very eyes order the rock to yield its water. Thus you shall produce water for them from the rock and provide drink for the congregation and their animals." Moshe took the staff from before Hashem, as He had commanded him. Moshe and Aharon assembled the congregation in front of the rock; and he said to them, "Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?" And Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Out came much water, and the community and their animals drank. But Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them." Those are the Waters of Meribah—meaning that the Israelites quarrelled with Hashem—through which He affirmed His sanctity.

Rashi, quoting Chazal, points to the action listed in the command and in reality: Hashem

commanded Moshe to speak to the rock, while Moshe in reality hit the rock. This explanation focuses not just on different approaches to getting others to change (violently hitting as opposed to gently speaking), but also highlights the need for different approaches in different times and generations: although Moshe had previously been commanded to hit a rock to have water come out, the times have now changed and a different approach is necessary.

The Ramban dismisses this approach, as the command to take the staff makes it clear that the command was to hit the rock, just as the staff had been used in previous ways (when Hashem had not explicitly commanded

that it be used to strike anything): why else would Hashem command it to be taken?

A second approach is offered by the Rambam, who focuses on the fact that Moshe became angry at Bnei Yisrael, with his anger causing him to verbally accost Bnei Yisrael, referring to them harshly as rebels. This approach as well

is informative, teaching us of the immense that teachers, leaders and parents have as role models: those with whom we interact are affected not just by our teachings, but by who we are as people and how we interact with the world and with them. Due to both Moshe and Bnei Yisrael's standing, this type of anger was out of place and was, according to the Rambam, a great chilul Hashem.

This approach is also dismissed by the Ramban, as the sin and punishment seem to be jointly Moshe and Aharon's, but the pesukim make no mention or hint of Aharon's anger.

The Ramban then quotes the opinion of

"As human beings, we are often tempted by our nature to take credit for results even if we know that the results are not solely from our own actions. It feels good to be praised, to be held in respect and admiration by others!"

Rabbeinu Chananel, judging it as the best one: it was instead the end of Moshe's statement of "shall we get water for you out of this rock." Although it was true that physically, the act was Moshe (and Aharon's), and that Moshe and Aharon meant that it was an act of Hashem that would cause the water to come out, the perception that was created was that they were attributing the miracle to themselves. Moshe and Aharon "missed out" on the opportunity to explain more clearly to the nation the miracle that Hashem was creating, and for this reason Hashem says that they did not "affirm My sanctity."

The lesson we can learn from Moshe and Aharon is relevant not only to our proper acknowledgement of Hashem as the source of all. As human beings, we are often tempted by our nature to take credit for results even if we know that the results are not solely from our own actions. It feels good to be praised, to be held in respect and admiration by others! It is not always easy to shine the light on others, to highlight their contributions (at the possible expense of our own), but it something that is often beneficial and necessary.

Shabbat Shalom!



**SUMMER MACHANE**  
 Sign up now before it's too late!  
 1st - 14th August 2018

- ALEPH | YEAR 6 | South Yorkshire | £790
- ALEPH CHALLUTZI | YEAR 7 | South Yorkshire | £790
- BET-BASE | YEAR 8 | Avila, Spain | £850
- BET CHALUTZI | YEAR 9 | Switzerland | £950
- GIMMEL | YEAR 10 | Avila, Spain | £990

TO APPLY: [www.bauk.org/machane-apply](http://www.bauk.org/machane-apply)  
 More details: Hannah Reuben | 02082091319 ext2  
 camps@bauk.org



**WINTER MACHANE 5779**

**SAVE THE DATE**  
 23rd-30th December  
 2018 | 5779

## Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question .....

Have a question? Please email [rav@bauk.org](mailto:rav@bauk.org) or call/message Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

**QUESTION FROM CHANA:** Is buying clothing in a sale (or any situation where you would otherwise lose the opportunity to get the item cheaply or at all) permitted during the three weeks?

**ANSWER:** Great question! We'll first start by discussing the general issue. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 551:17), quoting a custom from the Sefer Chassidim, states that one should refrain from making a shehechyanu during the three weeks. For this reason, we would refrain from purchasing and wearing new clothing, as such an act would obligate us to

make a shehechyanu. This is true even though someone who is in 12 months of mourning may make a shehechyanu (and many of the customs of 12 months of mourning are parallel to our customs during the three weeks), as the time period in which we will soon find ourselves is one of troubles. However, any "non-important" clothes that don't require a shehechyanu may still be purchased (such as undergarments, shoes etc.). Additionally, the Mishna Berurah (sk 98) writes that the Gra and Taz disagree with the psak of the Shulchan Aruch, and for that reason one can be lenient to wait to wear the garment until Shabbat and then make shehechyanu on Shabbat.

*Continued on page 4.*

However, this leniency for Shabbat would only apply during the three weeks and not on Shabbat that takes place during the nine days (MB sk 45). In the case of a sale, in which the sale will not continue past the nine days, one may buy clothing (Kinyan Torah 1:109), as this is considered a "דבר האבד", something that will be lost if not acted upon. However, it is best to not wear it until after Tisha B'Av, as the common practice is to make a shehechyanu on wearing the garment, and not at the moment of purchase.

TO SUMMARISE:

- a) During the three weeks, new clothing may be purchased and worn if it : i) will be worn on Shabbat, when one can then make a shehechyanu \*or\* ii) it is not clothing that requires a shehechyanu.
- b) During the nine days, new clothing may be purchased if it will not be available under similar conditions after the nine days, but it should not be worn until after the mourning period has ceased.

## Community Updates .....

HUGE MAZAL TOV to Boger of our Kivun program Yoni Harris on his Aliyah! Mazal Tov also to Stephanie Elek on her recent Aliyah! We wish them all the best on this new adventure - aloh na'aleh!



hosted some 200 Jewish refugee children as part of the Kindertransport. In the castle, under the guidance of Arieh Handler, the first Hachsharah (preparation) farm in Britain was established. Bnei Akiva and Bachad taught them the ideology of Torah v'Avodah and gave the young teenagers agricultural training to help them set up some of the early kibbutzim in the soon to be established State of Israel. The castle fell into disrepair over the years and a huge Ya'asher Koach is owed to Dr Baker for his efforts to preserve this amazing piece of British and Jewish history! Read the full story here on the Jewish News site: [bit.ly/gwrychcastle](http://bit.ly/gwrychcastle).

THIS COMING SHABBAT the Rav and Rabbanit will be hosting Madrichim from Mill Hill Bnei Akiva for a Seudah Shlishit.

THIS PAST WEEK Rabbanit Shira gave 2 shiurim to university aged students on Eicha and Eicha Rabbah. The shiurim were part of a learning program for young women co-organised by Bogeret Sara Ellerman. Ya'asher Koach to her on an innovative program!



WE WERE EXCITED to hear this past week that Gwrych Castle in Wales was bought as part of a 20-year long restoration campaign by Dr Mark Baker. The castle was home to Bnei Akiva and Bachad in the 1940s/50s and