



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS CHUKAS

CALMLY ERADICATE ANGER

"*M*ay *Meriva* (the waters of strife)." This event was a tragedy for Moshe and Aharon. They committed an *aveyra* so terrible that it prevented them from fulfilling their greatest ambition – entering Eretz Yisrael. What exactly was their *aveyra*? This is a subject of much discussion amongst the *meforshim*. The Rambam in *Shemoneh Prakim*, chapter four, explains that the *aveyra* was anger, which led to *Chilul Hashem* (desecration of the Holy Name).

Let us quickly review the facts. A miraculous well had accompanied the Bnei Yisrael throughout their forty years in the desert. This was in the merit of Miriam the *tsadekes*. When she died, the well stopped giving water. The Bnei Yisrael began to protest over the lack of water. Hashem commanded Moshe to take his staff, gather the people together, and speak to the rock. Water would then come forth. Did Hashem command Moshe to be angry or show any signs of anger? Not at all. A request for water does not deserve an angry reaction.

At this point, we must mention that Moshe was the *Gadol HaDor*, in a generation that was on the exalted *madrayga* (spiritual level) of prophecy. They knew that their exalted leader's deeds are the types that bring a person greatness in this world and the next. Therefore, everyone strove to learn from him and emulate his actions. If he showed patience, then they would know that patience was the proper reaction for their request for water.

Moshe erred by becoming angry. He took his staff, gathered the people, and said to them, "Listen you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?" (Bamidbar 20:10). He then hit the rock twice, instead of speaking to it. They had requested water, and subsequently saw Moshe Rabbeinu get angry at their request. Therefore, they understood that anger is the proper reaction to such a request. The Rambam explains that anger is an evil action, which comes from impure sources in the soul. An entire generation learned an evil *middah* from their leader. Such a massive mistake is a *Chilul Hashem*, as reflected in the next verse. Hashem said, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of

the Bnei Yisrael, therefore you will not bring this congregation into the Land that I have given them." (Bamidbar 20:12).

The Baalei Mussar devote much effort to correcting the *middah* of anger. The Orchos Tsaddikim cites the Gemora (Nedarim 22a) which states that all sorts of *gehennom* rule over one who gets angry. Anger also leads to physical ailments as the verse states, "Hashem will give you an angry heart, longing of the eyes, and suffering of the soul" (all symptoms of disease) [Devarim 28:65]. The Gemora in Nedarim adds that an angry person does not even consider the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) important. He forgets his learning and becomes foolish. His *aveyros* surely outnumber his mitzvos, and he will suffer a great punishment.



People lose control of themselves when they become angry. They do things that they would never do when calm. Why? Because anger takes away a person's *seichel* (common sense). Therefore, it is impossible for a habitually angry person to avoid great *aveyros*. A different Gemora (Eiruvin 65b) relates that a person's true nature is revealed in a situation that provokes him. If he overcomes his desire to become angry, that reveals his true wisdom. If his anger rules, then his foolishness is exposed. "Hashem loves three people . . . one who does not get angry" (Pesachim 113b).

The Sefer Charedim (9:42) explains that a person loses his holy *neschama* when he becomes angry. It is replaced by the evil spirit of *Avodah Zara* (idol worship), and the person himself becomes *Avodah Zara*. This is hinted to in the verse, "You shall not make yourselves molten gods" (Shemos 34:17). You yourself become a {molten} god (*Avodah Zara*) when you become angry. Therefore, anger is actually a negative commandment in the Torah.

The root of anger is pride. A person

tells himself, "I feel that I do not receive the honor that I deserve, therefore I become angry." This pride is a fallacy, stemming from a weakness in *emunah*. The proper mental response is, "Hashem knows what is best for me. He knows that the honor that I feel I deserve is really not good for me. If I had perfect *emunah*, I would humbly realize that I am getting exactly what is good for me. Perhaps I am not receiving the honor because I need to work on my humility. The thing that I desire may really be damaging to me." Either way, anger is not the proper reaction.

The Sefer Charedim brings us techniques to avoid anger. The word "Noach", besides being the name of the tsaddik, also means "at rest". Therefore the verse, "And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem" (Bereshis 6:8) can be darshened to mean, "A person whose heart is always at rest and settled, finds favor in the eyes of Hashem." The next verse mentions Noach three times to teach that Noach's heart was very settled because his speech, his walking, and his deeds were all done restfully, without any anger. Outward calmness, leads to inner peace, which leaves no place for anger to enter.

Kinderlach . . . Anger is one of the worst things in the world. It can destroy everything that a person has hoped and worked for his entire life. It robbed Moshe Rabbeinu of achieving his greatest ambition. It causes a person to lose his soul, his learning, and his seichel. In their place come disease, Avodah Zara, and gehennom. Oy va voy voy voy. How do we avoid this terrible fate? Firstly, we must review these mussar thoughts regularly, to remind us of the seriousness of anger. Secondly, we should strive for calmness and peace in all of our outward actions. The Ramban tells us to always speak softly. The Sefer Charedim advises walking and moving in a restful and settled manner. These outward actions will sink into our inner soul and eventually eradicate the evil middah of anger from our hearts.

- Parasha Questions:
- On which days does the tomei mes receive the waters of ashes of the Parah Adumah? (19:11,12)
 - In what ways does a dead body make people and kelim tomei? (19:14-16)
 - Where did Miriam die? (20:1)
 - What was Moshe's request of the king of Edom? (20:17)