

of the next 40 years, never to reach Eretz Yisrael.

It was during that time that Moshe Rabbeinu himself was denied the opportunity to enter Eretz Yisrael because of the incident wherein he struck the rock. Had Moshe Rabbeinu entered Eretz Yisrael, there never would have been a destruction of the Holy Temple, and the ensuing exile. History would have been drastically different.

What emerges is that Judaism is not exclusively about learning Torah and doing mitzvos, regardless of one's intentions and attitude. Chovos halevavos, duties of the heart and spirit, are critical. It is because of poor attitude to how we relate to Torah and mitzvos that we find ourselves in galus to this day.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

There is a proverb found in the Gemara – שתיקותא בתרי מיילי בסלע, literally; “Words can be worth a coin, but but silence is worth two!”.

It is intended to illustrate the power of being introvert, not speaking when not required.

The Vilna Gaon says that the etymology of the proverb is directly sourced the parsha.

סלע is a unit of currency, but literally translates to “rock”. Eldad and Medad foretold that Moshe was going to die and Yehoshua would bring them into Israel – יהושע מכניס משה מת, – Moshe was to remain in the desert, for the sin of hitting the rock and not speaking to it.

In other words מיילי בסלע – if Moshe had spoken to the rock, then שתיקותא בתרי; the two, Eldad and Meidad, would have remained silent – never predicting Moshe's downfall. Truly, the power of not speaking up.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

A puzzling event takes place, wherein people start prophesying in the main camp when the ‘spirit of Hashem rests on them’. Two men in particular continue after the others stop. A lad runs to Moshe to report that אלדד ומידד מתנבאים במחנה – “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp”. Yehoshua leapt up and advised Moshe to imprison them. Moshe retorted that he wished everyone were a prophet. End of episode.

What exactly is the issue? Moshe's reaction seems like a no-brainer? What is wrong with prophecy? And why the extra word במחנה – where else would they be?

Rashi quotes the Gemara in Sanhedrin that re-frames what transpired. They foresaw that יהושע מכניס משה מת – “Moshe will die and Yehoshua will take the lead into Israel,”. Yehoshua took great umbrage at their outrageous claim, and Moshe calmed him by pointing out the prophetic nature of their words.

But where does the Gemara get the idea that these were the words of Eldad and Medad?

The Maharil Diskin explains that a look at Moshe's beginning hints at his downfall. When the abandoned Moshe is found by Pharaoh's daughter, she names him Moshe – כי מן המים משיתהו – “for I drew him out of the water”. There is an emphasis on the definite article – “the water”. Naming him משה was contingent on משיתהו – it wasn't specific to “the” water. In other words, she could well have said ממים משיתהו – “for I drew him from water,”. The letters ה and נ seem extra as a result.

Returning to Eldad and Medad, the Torah stresses their prophecy was במחנה – which can literally be rendered מח-נה – “erase the ה”. Erase the ה from how Moshe was named, and it says ממים משיתהו – the word ממים has the initial letters of משה מת יהושע מכניס. The emphasis of במחנה perhaps explains how Chazal understood what they truly foresaw – re-framing our understanding of the episode.

ON ANTAGONISTS

Avraham is blessed by Hashem after the Akeida:

כי ברך אברהם והרבה ארבה את זרעך ככוכבי השמים וכחול אשר על שפת הים וירש זרעך את שער איביו – I will bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants, like the stars of the heavens, and like the sand on the seashore; and your descendants will inherit the cities of their enemies. (22: 17)

Years later, Lavan blesses Rivka as she leaves to marry Yitzchak:

ויברכו את רבקה ויאמרו לה אחתנו את ה'י לאלפי רבבה וירש זרעך את שער שנאיו – And they blessed Rebecca and said to her, “Our sister, may you become thousands of myriads, and may your seed inherit the cities of those who hate you.” (24: 60)

Rashi notes that Lavan is quoting the blessing received by Avraham, that she’d “inherit the cities” of her antagonists.

But the quote is not identical. What is the difference between איביו – enemies and שנאיו – those who hate you?

R’ Yehoshua Hartman points to where the two are used in conjunction to note the difference.

ויהי בנסע הארץ ויאמר משה קומה ה' ויפצו איביו וינסו משנאיו מפניך – So it was, whenever the Ark set out, Moses would say, “Arise, Lord, may Your enemies be scattered and may those who hate You flee from You.”

Rashi says that איביו is enemies who are assembled for battle, and that וינסו משנאיו are pursuers.

There is a distinction between an enemy and a pursuer. The word איב is similar in root to the word אוהב – to love. Both verbs are a result of closeness. A שונא however, is someone whose hatred transcends proximity, and will pursue.

Eisav is referred to as שונא ישאל, and Yishmael is referred to as אויב ישראל, and circumstances on the ground reflect this – if a Jewish State had been set up in Uganda, there would be no problems with the Palestinians and neighbours, inheritors of the mantle of Yishmael – the situation is a result of being together. Conversely, the Nazis had little to do with Jews worldwide, and yet their extermination campaign spanned the globe; truly the definition of רודף.

But how does this insight correlate to the different terminology Rivka and Avraham were blessed with?

R’ Hartman explains that at Mt. Moriah, the blessing was to Avraham, for Yitzchak, regarding his Yishmael – the אויב, therefore the pasuk says שער איביו. In contrast, Rivka received a bracha that was for Yakov, regarding Esav, and Esav is a שונא, and therefore the pasuk says שער שנאיו.

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