

HUKAT 1 - THE STAFF THE ROCK AND THE SERPENT

One method to try and decipher the precise sin of Moshe Rabenu is to analyze the Divine words of rebuke in the verse following the incident at the Rock. It reads לא האמנתם בי - Elucidated mystically - You (Moshe) have failed to join the spiritual divine grades of Kudsha Berikh Hu and his Shehina properly. The word האמנתם is etymologically rooted in the letters of אמן which is associated with unifying these grades. 1 What is the purpose to join these grades? - להקדישני - To effectuate Divine Kidushin or unity. 2 This means that the oneness of the Creator is prevalent in the spiritual and physical realms of Creation. We apparently have the code. Moshe at the time had an opportunity to fashion a permanent unity between Kudsha Berikh Hu - which is the Divine male grade of providing spiritual flow and blessing and his Shehina - the Divine female grade of receiving it. The latter being the spiritual reservoir from which we here below nourish. A proper unification by Moshe would have prevented any access of the Divine flow to the Serpent and would have been a precursor for Bene Yisrael to enter the land with Moshe as their (Mashiah) leader.

THREE STAGES TO BUILD THE SHEHINA

Rabenu Bahya writes that the Rock referenced in our Parasha called a סלע is identical with the one called צור at Horev - and is also identical with the באר of Miryam. 3 This Rock which gives off water (life) is the physical manifestation of the Shehina. From this spiritual reservoir - Israel were to nourish until they would enter the land which is the permanent home of the Shehina. R. Bahya adds that the Rock appears in the Torah under at least three different names. It appears to me that each of these three references represents a different stage in the ascent of the Shehina as it receives from Kudsha Berikh Hu. Each stage represents a varied level to receive from above and send forth below in its capacity as the spiritual reservoir of Israel. 4 They are in ascending order צור - Sur; סלע - Sela; and באר - Be'er. Rashi in his commentary on the Talmud notes that the Rock which water miraculously flowed accompanied Israel during their sojourn in the desert. 5 It was revealed as a צור at Horev "Behold I shall stand before you by the Rock צור - "Since the Sur represents the Shehina in its infancy stage - the unity to be aroused via the staff of Moshe was to occur via striking. As it is written - "You shall strike the צור and water will come forth." 6 After being forgiven at the Egel - we see Hashem telling Moshe to take up a position next to him - על הצור - next to the Rock. 7 Later on the Shehina ascended temporarily in the merit of Miryam to the level of a באר - or well. At that stage in the Divine unity - There was no need for Moshe to arouse the Rock in any way to give off water. However, with the death of Miryam the Shehina descended once again 8 with the באר - the wellbeing reduced to the stage of סלע - rock. In order to arouse the Shehina at this stage Moshe was instructed to speak to the סלע to effectuate unity. 9 Anything more would cause a blemish.

THE WARNING - SERPENT CAN BE AROUSED

It appears as if Moshe had been forewarned forty years earlier at the burning bush that his staff can arouse with it the power of the serpent. At that time - Moshe had doubted that Israel will believe that he was being sent as the redeemer. "They will not believe me...What is in your hand? " Moshe then sees the staff turn into a snake. The verse continues and follows that Moshe had fled - as this transformation served as a warning 10 that if the staff upon which was engraved the Holy Divine Name (Midrash Agadah) was used erroneously the power of the serpent can and would be elevated. If there would come a time that that the unity of Hashem is not expressed via the staff - the serpent will be aroused. The serpent of course being the snake of Gan Eden who was the first to slander and cause Havah and

Adam to sin. From here on Moshe would have to be particularly careful in using the Staff - as he evidently was throughout the exodus and years in the desert.

THE SIN OF MOSHE IS PARALLEL THAT OF ADAM HARISHON

The verse in our parasha reads - "Moshe took the staff from before God as he had been instructed...Listen now you Rebels shouted Moshe, shall we produce water for you from this סלע - rock? With that Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff." 11 According to R. HaAri the error of Moshe here paralleled the error of Adam HaRishon. 12 According to view the Sages, the latter we know had relations with Havah before Shabbat - prior to her being spiritually ready. 13 This allowed the Serpent to pollute Havah and her descendants. 14 Since the סלע represents the Shehina on a level superior to that expressed in the word צור - it was only necessary to speak to the rock to effectuate a unity. This is in the secret of the verse in Mishle - "the way of a snake upon a rock. 15 The intent was for Moshe to speak to the סלע in order to transform it back into a באר - or a Well. According to the Midrash cited by R.M. Alshikh - As long as the spirituality of Israel was in its infancy (40 years prior) Moshe was instructed to hit the rock. 16 Now that they had possessed the Torah for almost 40 years and were spiritually so much more mature the rock merely needed to be spoken to. Hence what Moshe did represent an improper attempt at unification allowing the dormant serpent to re-awaken from out of his staff - Furthermore the stage represented by the סלע is numerically 160 parallel to עץ or the tree of knowledge from which Adam partook. R. M. Alshikh notes that the word המן Ha-Min occurs only twice in the Torah. Once here המן הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים - Shall we get water for you from this rock? 17 Curiously the other place is in Beresheet where Hashem inquires into the infraction of Adam - המן העץ - Did you eat from the tree which I commanded you not to eat? 18 This amplifies the connection between the sin at the סלע with that of Adam at the Tree of Knowledge. In both instances the result of untimely attempts to unify were met with the arousal of the Serpent.

SUMMARY

The Shehina had been in an elevated stage represented as a סלע - An opportunity was missed at that time to unify the spiritual channels above. 19 As a result we were overcome by the spirit of impurity and once again subject to the power of the serpent. However, the Midrash also teaches that Moshe will once again have an opportunity to lead us - and at that time effectuate unity above and below. 20 We will then enter the land 21 which represents an elevated permanent stage of the Shehina - nourishing with no fear of the serpent.

Shabbat Shalom

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