

PARSHAS CHUKAS

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The Attitude of Gratitude

Speak to the rock before their eyes that it shall give its waters... Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock. (Num. 20:8,11)

Moshe was commanded to bring forth water from the rock by talking to it, but he erred and instead struck the rock twice until water poured forth. This sin caused Moshe to lose the privilege of entering the Land of Israel with the nation. Rashi explains that God had commanded Moshe to speak to the rock that had given them water before, but he could not find it. He spoke to a different rock, but nothing happened. He then proceeded to hit the rock which subsequently produced water.

The difficulty is that Moshe listened to G-d and spoke to the rock - he just couldn't find it! Why was he then punished, being found at fault for not recognizing the rock?

The Torah demands of us to recognize our benefactors and to appreciate them. The Egyptians had greatly harmed the Jewish people, but we are enjoined not to treat them similarly. The reason is because Egypt had provided food and lodging when Yaakov and his family resided there. That alone is enough for us to be thankful. The rock that had been providing the Jews with water for 40 years as they wandered in the desert should have been easily recognizable amongst the other rocks! Not recognizing that rock is considered a lack of appreciation and a grave sin.

The first thing a Jew starts his day with is gratitude: "Modeh ani l'fonecha..."- "I gratefully thank you, O living and eternal King, for You have returned my soul within me with compassion..." Being grateful is the very fiber of a Jew. The Hebrew word for Jew is Yehudi which also means one who thanks. Gratitude helps one focus and take pleasure in what he has rather than concentrate on what he's lacking - which is the key to being a happy person.