

פרשת חקת / Parashat Chukat

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Have you sanctified the name of HaShem today?

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Numbers 19:1-22:1
הפטרה: Judges 11:1-33
הברית: John 3:10-21 Hebrews 9:11-28
החדשה

10 In this week's parsha the children of Israel move to the wilderness of Tzin and begin to complain to Moshe and Aharon about the lack of water in the region. As a result, Moshe and Aharon consult HaShem on what they should do. Then in the process of bringing the solution Moshe and Aharon sin. Their sin causes them to remain in the wilderness and not be allowed into the Promised Land. Reading through the relevant text (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 20:1-13*) the question arises about what exactly Moshe did wrong that caused him such a harsh punishment. In the Rabbinic literature we find a similar question; what exactly did Moshe do that caused G-d to punish him in such a way?

20 Rashi explains:

(יא) פעמים לפי שבראשונה לא הוציא אלא א טיפין. לפי שלא צוה המקום להכותו אלא ודברתם אל הסלע. והמה דברו אל סלע אחר ולא הוציא. אמרו שמא צריך להכותו כבראשונה. שנאמר והכית בצור (שמות יז. ו). ונזדמן להם אותו סלע והכה: (יב) **ען לא האמנתם בי**. גלה הכתוב ב שאלולי הטא זה בלבד ג היו

Rashi explains that Moshe hits the rock instead of talking to it.

Rashi explains that Moshe hits the rock instead of talking to it. Other commentators such as Ibn Ezra say that Moshe hits the rock twice instead of once. Rambam says that Moshe loses his temper and speaks harshly to the people. Rambam quotes Rabeinu Chananel explaining that Moshe's sin lies in his comments prior to hitting the rock. Instead of saying "can G-d get water from this rock?" he says "can we get water from this rock?" Does this suggest that he and Aharon can somehow draw the water from the rock and not G-d?

25 To understand these differences in opinion and classical interpretations of the text in question let's look at *Bamidbar / Numbers 20:1-13* and examine the various points of contention amongst the commentators:

וַיִּבְאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּלַיְלָהָא מִדְּבַר-צִין בְּתַחֲדֵי הָרֵאשִׁון וַיִּשָּׁב
הָעָם בְּקֶדֶשׁ וַתִּמַּת שֵׁם מֹרְיָם וַתִּקְבֹּר שֵׁם: וְלֹא-יָחִי מִיָּם
לְעֵדָה וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן: וַיִּרֶב הָעָם עִבְרֵי-מֹשֶׁה
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר וְלוֹ גִּעַעְנוּ בַּגֹּעַ אַחֲנֵינוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: וְלִמָּחָ
הִבַּאתֶם אֶת-יְקַהֵל יְהוָה אֶל-הַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לְמֹת שֵׁם אֲנַחְנוּ

The children of Israel complain again about it being better to have died with their brethren in Parashat Korach

5 וּבְעִירָנוּ: וְלָמָּה הִעֲלִיתֵנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהַבְיֵא אֹתָנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם
 הַרְעָה הַזֶּה לֹא מִקּוֹם זָרַע וְתִאֲנָה וְגִפְנִן וְרִמּוֹן וַיְמִים אֵין לִשְׁתוֹת:
 6 וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מִפְּנֵי הַקְּהָל אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּפְּלוּ
 עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם:
 7, 8 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: קַח אֶת־הַמַּטֵּה וְהַקְּהָל אֶת־
 הָעֵדָה אֹתָהּ וְאַהֲרֹן אֶחָד וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־הַסֶּלַע לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְנָתַן
 מִיָּמִינוּ וְהִצִּאתָ לָהֶם מַיִם מִן־הַסֶּלַע וְהִשְׁקִיתָ אֶת־הָעֵדָה וְאֶת־
 9 בְּעִירָם: וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמַּטֵּה מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ:
 10 וַיִּקְהָלוּ מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַקְּהָל אֶל־פְּנֵי הַסֶּלַע וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם
 11 שְׁמַעְיָנָא הַמַּיִם לְמַן־הַסֶּלַע הַזֶּה נּוֹצֵיא לָכֶם מַיִם: וַיִּרֶם
 מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַסֶּלַע בְּמַטְהוֹ פַּעַמִּים וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם רַבִּים
 12 וַתִּשֶׂה הָעֵדָה וּבְעִירָם: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה
 13 וְאַל־אֲהַרְוֶן יַעַן לֹא־הֵאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 לָכֵן לֹא תָבִיאי אֶת־הַקְּהָל הַזֶּה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לָהֶם:
 הִמָּה מִי מְרִיבָה אֲשֶׁר־רָבוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְהוָה וַיִּקְדַּשׁ בָּם:

Moshe and Aharon run to the Ohel Moed rather than stand up for the Lord before the people.
 We can get water from this rock?
 Moshe answers harshly...
 "Because you did not believe me to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel..."

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The scriptures say that Moshe and Aharon could have done something great by sanctifying HaShem in the eyes of the children of Israel. However they failed to do so and the Torah does not say exactly what was done wrong. I believe the key to understanding this is found in *Bamidbar / Numbers 20:12* *But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'* (NASB)

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To understand why HaShem said what he did and what Moshe and Aharon did wrong I would like to look closer at the Hebrew word in verse 20:12 for "sanctify." So, let's begin by looking at this Hebrew word and then we can discuss further why HaShem says Moshe and Aharon did not believe in him.

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לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי

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The root Hebrew word for "sanctify" (קדש) is found here in verse 20:12 in the Hiphil stem, infinitive construct. We have evidence for the infinitive construct seeing the hireq Yod stem vowel. It is the stem vowel that distinguishes the infinitive construct (הקטיל) from the Hiphil imperative masculine singular (הקטל). In the English language the infinitive is the basic form of a verb, without an inflection binding it to a particular subject or tense (normally occurring in English with the word to, as in to see, to ask). The Hiphil stem is used to express a causative type of action with an active voice. With the lamed as a preposition juxtaposed to the beginning of the word, and the pronominal suffix ending the

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60 word making it a possessive/objective, it literally means “to cause me to be
sanctified.” This causative action is very important for it implies that holiness
(קדושה) relating to sanctification requires a type of action.

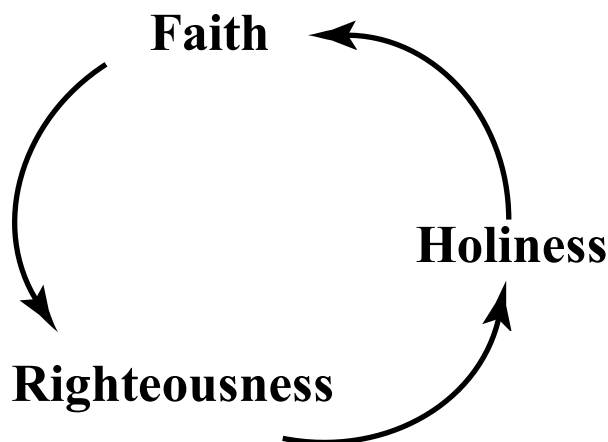
Holiness relating to sanctification requires a type of action

65 To understand the gravity of the situation here, and the reason for G-d’s
judgment on Moshe and Aharon (not allowing them to enter the Promised Land)
we have to look closely at holiness, faith, and righteousness. I believe the concept
of righteousness, holiness, and faith is slightly misunderstood in Judaism and in
70 the church today. The problem I want to address specifically deals with the
problems of completely spiritualizing holiness today, over against what we find in
this week’s parsha that Moshe and Aharon did not by their actions sanctify the
Lord. Or in other words, they did not cause HaShem’s name to be holy in the
eyes of the children of Israel.

75 There is a close knit inter-relationship between faith, righteousness and
holiness but each has its own particular characteristics which restrict one from
complete spiritualization. Let’s start by looking at some definitions. I drew a
diagram in order to illustrate that faith, righteousness, and holiness are closely tied
together.

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The inter-relationship of Faith, Righteousness, and Holiness



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Definitions

- **Faith** is best described here in the Cetuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings)
 - *Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (NASB)*
- **Righteousness**
 - Righteousness is justification, the grounds, reason, basis upon which one is vindicated by G-d.

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• **Holiness**

- The state or quality of being holy, integrity of purity, freedom from sin.

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So you may be asking at this time what I mean by “spiritualizing holiness.” To explain this I need to discuss my experience from two communities which believe they are saved by faith in G-d’s Messiah Yeshua, (i) the church, and (ii) the Messianic community.

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In the Christian church, I have been told that by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, we are not only counted righteous unto salvation, but also, we are holy and do not have to do anything necessarily speaking in the sense of walking holy before the Lord (and certainly not the Torah and its instruction for our lives). Now there is some variety in opinion here but generally speaking the only thing that one must keep are the moral laws relating to not stealing, killing, and sexual immorality.

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For further study see *Parashat Behar* and my comments on understanding the differences between a Greek versus a Hebrew mindset and the concept of ontology. (http://www.matsati.com/2007-2008/Parashat%20Behar%20_2007-2008_.pdf)

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In the Messianic community, I have seen some people strongly imply, and even say, those in the church who refuse to observe the Torah, though they believe in Yeshua the Messiah, are not saved because they do not by the same spirit live obediently to the Lord. The crux (central point) of the argument is that by the same spirit we should all have similar convictions in relation to G-d’s instruction for our lives on the Torah. So how do we deal with these drastic differences in biblical hermeneutics from these two communities who claim that Yeshua is the Messiah and that our sins are forgiven by faith in G-d’s Messiah and only in G-d’s Messiah?

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I believe it all comes down to our understanding of holiness. In the parsha, Moshe and Aharon by their actions did not make the name of the Lord holy before the people. How does this tie into faith? It is by faith we are counted righteous and the application of righteousness is living a holy life in obedience to the Lord. We do not become holy simply by believing in what HaShem has done on our behalf (that is complete spiritualization). Take for example in the Torah, G-d said to tell the congregation of Israel to be holy for I the Lord your God is holy.

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Leviticus 19:2

דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עֲדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קֹדֶשׁ תִּהְיוּ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֵל הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

Leviticus 19:2

19”2 ‘Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. (NASB)

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145 Interestingly enough, we find the Apostle Peter also telling us that we need to be holy because it is written “be holy for I am holy.”

1 Peter 1:15-16

פִּי אִם־קֹדְשִׁים תִּהְיוּ בְּכָל־דַּרְכֵיכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר הִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם קְדוֹשׁ הוּא
כִּי כֵן כָּתוּב וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי

1Peter 1:15-16

150 *1:15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 1:16 because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ (NASB)*

155 The point I want to make is this, if we were already holy by faith, we would not have to be told to be holy again and again in the scriptures. This is because holiness is the “practical application” of our faith, i.e. a changed life for Hashem is demonstrated in our holy living.

160 In this day and age where good sound biblical teaching is so lacking we need to be teachers, instructors, and educators on the truths found in the scriptures. Not whiners and complainers of what we might feel is lacking in someone else’s life and walk before the Most High God.

165 For further study, see what I wrote about the characteristics of a good teacher... (<http://www.matsati.com/What%20are%20the%20Characteristics%20of%20a%20Good%20Teacher.pdf>)

My challenge for two communities

His torah

170 My challenge for the church today is this: “look for and try to find what it is G-d wants you to do in order to walk holy before him.” In the Cetuvei Shelachim (Apostolic writings) the people were amazed at Yeshua’s torah referring to his instruction (*Matthew 7:28* נִיְהִי כְּכֹלֹת יֵשׁוּעַ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּתְמַהוּ הַמּוֹן הָעָם (עַל־תּוֹרָתוֹ: :עַל־תּוֹרָתוֹ:)), Yeshua spoke and taught with authority. The use of the word “Torah” meaning instruction is clear as shown in *Matthew 7:28*. The Torah is G-d’s instruction for our lives today, so, the challenge is to strive to understand what it truly means to be a holy nation of priests in the Messiah Yeshua. There is a blessing here that you are missing out on; the blessing of being liberated in the joy of the Lord in a good conscious before G-d. The Torah is not bondage under the law as is taught so often today in the church.

185 My challenge for the Messianic community is this: “try to remember what it was like when you were once without the Torah.” A good teacher is one who is longsuffering just as HaShem is longsuffering with us. It is easy to judge another person’s walk as less than adequate. Criticism is everywhere, television, radio, news paper, etc you name it ... we have been preconditioned to criticize others. You have a wonderful gift of knowing G-d and living in the joy of His instruction.

190 Isn't it time to start sharing the joy and the Love of HaShem you have found in
His Torah, and be teachers, instructors, and educators in patience and love rather
than being a teacher in a critical spirit always judging your neighbor's heart over
against your own. Do you think there is any danger in judging a person's heart
and salvation because their observance isn't filled with as much zeal as yours?

195 **Conclusion**

195 In this week's parsha Moshe and Aharon sin by not sanctifying the Lord by
their faith in Him. The question is raised what exactly it was Moshe and Aharon
did to warrant the harsh punishment? It quite possibly could be that all of the
200 rabbinic sages are correct; there are multiple things both Moshe and Aharon did
which caused their punishment. I say it doesn't matter what it was they did; the
point is we have to sanctify the name of the Lord in our lives on a daily basis.
The consequences of neglecting to do so are severe even though it may appear not
to be so in the immediate sense (i.e. mistaking HaShem's patience in that by his
patience we are lead to repentance or T'shuvah).

205 The process of sanctification begins by placing our faith in Yeshua, G-d's
Messiah, and in his shed blood. Now, the role of sanctifying G-d's name in our
lives is also a continuing process; continuing in the sense that it becomes a daily
process as we persevere to live a life of obedience to HaShem. I feel this is the
true meaning of this week's parsha.

210 **Final thoughts**

215 Now I believe that Torah observance is for everyone, both Jew and non-Jew. I
also believe we as messianic believers need to encourage everyone who loves
Yeshua and believes in Him to show their love for Him by walking in holiness
according to His Torah. I also realize sometimes in our zeal we can behave in
less than holy ways towards others in our attitudes towards them. I just want to
encourage everyone to remember where they come from and maybe, in gentleness
and perseverance we can welcome more brothers and sisters into a new life, one
220 which enjoys the instruction G-d has planned for each of us.

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230 **Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!**

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
235 "Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever