

Moshe is giving his last teachings to the Beni Yisrael and he recalls his sin of the ‘waters of strife’ and why he cannot enter the Land.

Deuteronomy 3:26

וַיִּתְעַבֵּר בִּי לְמַעַנְכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי רַב־לֵךְ
אֶל־תּוֹסֵף דַּבֵּר אֵלַי עוֹד בַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

“The Lord has wrath towards me because of you, and He did not listen to my supplications.

HaShem said to me, it is more abundant than enough for you, do not add on any more words to me, you have already said enough of this.”

It is curious and seemingly a revisionist history of events for Moshe to blame his sin on the Bnei Yisrael. It says clearly earlier, “And HaShem said to Moshe and to Aaron, as a result of you not believing in Me to Sanctify me in the eyes of the Bnei Yisrael, so therefore you both will not bring these People to the Land that I will give them.” (Numbers 20:12). From this report it was Moshe and Aharon that sinned. In our verse above, it seems like Moshe was blaming the Bnei Yisrael.

This is not the only revision of history reported in Moshe. There are several and one notable is the way Moshe reports the Ten Commandments. It says here, “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord has commanded you, that you may long endure, and that you may fare well, in the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.” (ibid 5:16). HaShem said originally, “Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord is assigning to you.” (Exodus 20:12). Moshe added on that you may fare well.

We can say that one reason Moshe now taught the Laws a bit differently was because he was speaking to a generation that did not stand at Sinai. The entire generation that stood at Mount Sinai, save for Yehoshua and Colev, (and Moshe himself) were now passed. No one else in this generation was alive to enter the Land that left Egypt.

However, how can Moshe blame the Israelites for his sin? The Gemara Brochos 32:b learns from this verse, the power of prayer. “Rabbi Elazar said: This verse proves that prayer is greater than good deeds as there was none greater in the performance of good deeds than Moshe our teacher; nevertheless, his request was granted, [albeit in a limited manner] only through prayer, when HaShem permitted him to climb the mountain and look out over the land. As, initially it is stated: ‘Speak no more to Me’ juxtaposed to ‘Go up to the summit of the mountain.’”

The Gemara in Sotah 13b says “Rabbi Levi says: Moshe proclaimed to the Bnei Yisrael when rebuking them with the term “*rav*,” and therefore it was proclaimed to him with the term “*rav*” that he would not enter Eretz Yisrael. He proclaimed with the term “*rav*” when speaking with the congregation of Korach: “You take too much upon you [*rav lakhem*], you sons of Levi” (Numbers 16:7), and it was proclaimed to him with the term “*rav*,” as he was denied his request and said: “Let it suffice for you [*rav lakh*].”

We have a message here of the power of prayer. So how is Moshe blaming the Bnei Yisrael for his not entering the land?

Rashi says on “למענכם” that it means “you caused this for me.”

Sforno takes a different approach. He says that HaShem was angry at Moshe “for trying to ensure your permanent stay in that land while He had already decreed that at a certain point in history your descendants would be exiled among the gentiles.” He connects that if Moshe

brought the People into the Land they would have never been exiled. So it is not a blame, per se, but saying that Moshe had to suffer for the ultimate good of the Bnei Yisrael (according to the divine plan).

The Bechor Shor elaborates on this idea and says that “רַב לְךָ” is that Moshe is being told it is an abundance for him, and there has to be a set amount. Moshe already saw the great miracles of the Exodus, of Har Sinai, of the Yam Suf, and the wars with other nations; the mahn, and the mishkan. If Moshe was able to pass into the Land he would then want to see the Beis Hamikdash. Like Onkolos translates the verse “Let me, I pray, cross over and see the good Land on the other side of the Jordan, that good hill country, and the Lebanon” (Deuteronomy 3:25), the “Lebonon” as the Beis Hamikdash.

We see later in Kings that when Shlomo builds the Beis Hamikdash he gets wood from Tzor, in the Lebanon region.

Bekor Shor goes on and says that it would never end for Moshe and he would then live out his days in the Land and never pass from this earth. So HaShem had to tell him “enough” it is already abundant.

The Birkat Asher says that how is it the Bnei Yisrael caused Moshe’s sin? It is “because they complained to him. If they did not complain then Moshe would not have had to talk to a rock and hit it by mistake.” However, how can Moshe blame them? Sure, Moshe was made to have to make a choice, but Moshe made that choice.

Chizkuni says on “למעונכם” “but the Lord was angry at me for your sakes;” HaShem had said to Moshe “if you cross the Jordan into the Holy Land, people will say that the decree against the generation which had come out of Egypt to die in the desert was because they had forfeited their claim on an afterlife. If I now allow you to enter the Holy Land in response to your prayer,

they will say that Moshe was not concerned with anyone but himself. Therefore you will be buried where they are buried, and both you and they will rise at the time of the resurrection and live in the Holy Land.” This is the meaning of: “They positioned themselves at the head of the nation” in Deuteronomy 33,21 “they (the tribe of Gad) positioned himself at the head of the fighting men of the people”, i.e. as the pioneers. Moshe by agreeing to be buried in the fields of Moab displayed his total identification with the fate of his people. Accordingly, it was not blame, but more for their sake. למענכם does not mean *because of you* but it means *for your sake*.

Still, why was HaShem angry at Moshe for their sake?

Ohr HaChaim points out that “the words רב לך may also be the answer to Moshe’s offer to immediately resign his position so as not to conflict with the period during which Yehoshua, who was already anointed as successor, was to reign. Moshe could not do this as the position allocated to him was a lifetime position. He had to remain leader as long as he was alive. Crossing the Jordan as a private citizen was out of the question. He could not transfer his status to Joshua during his lifetime. So it was enough for Moshe, he could not add on, life without leadership.”

Moshe commenced the redemption by taking the Israelites out of Egypt. Now he could not finish it by bringing them into the Land. That was for Yehoshua. Something the Bnei Yisrael did or omitted, sinned in a way, was preventing Moshe from completing the task.

Rabbainu Bechaya says “According to the plain meaning of the text HaShem became filled with anger on account of the Bnei Yisrael’s many complaints. We have a similar verse in ibid 4:21 where the wording is “the Lord was angry at me on account of your words. Moshe’s own reaction to some of the Israelites’ complaints was described in similar language, such as in Psalms 106:32 where it says “and Moshe suffered on their account.”

So now we have to look at the verse and break it down. “The Lord has wrath towards me because of you, and He did not listen to my supplications. HaShem said to me, it is more abundant than enough for you, do not add on any more words to me, you have already said enough of this.” (Deuteronomy 3:26). Let’s take it step by step. HaShem is angry at me. He did not listen to my supplications. He told me enough, I have already had an abundance. It is for your sake that I am not going to enter the land.

We can also say not *your sake* but on *your behalf*. The sin that Moshe did that did not allow him to enter the Land was he failed to sanctify HaShem’s name when he struck the rock at the waters of strife. It was on their sake and if not for the sin he would enter. This is because they would all have had the Kiddush HaShem and they would not fail in the future. They would have seen the water come from the rock upon command and know that no matter how Moshe leads them, how HaShem leads them, and they cannot fail. When Moshe failed in this mission, he lost his leadership. They no longer had faith in him as leader.

So, if he had not lost that faith in his leadership and made the sanctification of the Name of HaShem, the Bnei Yisrael would have completely conquered the Land and stayed there—like the Sforno says. Thus, Moshe would stay leader and he could stay alive, with the Bnei Yisrael, in the Land. There would be no benefit to him not to enter the land. Yehoshua would not be leader—like Ohr HaCham—so Moshe can stay alive. There would be no complaints as to why Moshe is not with the people who died in the desert—like the Chizkuni—so Moshe can stay alive and enter the Land. However, this did not come to be so the converse had to be true. Yehoshua had to take over and Moshe had to satisfy himself with seeing the Land.

However, the sin was Moshe's for hitting the rock and causing the loss of leadership. Why is it the Bnei Yisrael's benefit or fault or for their sake? And why did HaShem become angry?

We saw, previously, the power of prayer. Moshe did have much merit and he even merited seeing the Land. However, it was only Moshe who prayed. Through all the complaints that were heaped upon Moshe and HaShem in the desert it was Moshe that prayed and supplicated for the Nation to exist and subsist. HaShem points out something poignant in using "it is abundant for you." Moshe used those words to Korach in saying, "you have reached your station in life. You already were blessed. You cannot achieve any more by taking it." Moshe, similarly, reached his station in life, and could no longer achieve anymore by taking it.

He could not take it. However, it can be given to him. When Moshe told the Bnei Yisrael that he would not pass to the Land, he was not telling them that it was their fault because of his sin. However, a major omission is existent. That is, they did not supplicate HaShem on Moshe's behalf. Not a single tefillah is recorded from anyone on Moshe's behalf. It was Moshe alone and Moshe had already peaked on earth.

So Moshe was telling us here: HaShem was angry at me *on your behalf*. It was my fault that you did not get the sanctification of HaShem's name. It was my fault that I ruined my own leadership. The best divine plan was for me to take you out and to take you in. HaShem was angry on your behalf because I ruined that. And now, the Bnei Yisrael were destined not to completely conquer the Land and to eventually be spit out, twice. The anger *was for your sake* and I am at fault. Moshe did not blame them. He was taking the blame and saying he ruined it for them. In his ultimate humility and strength as a leader, he took the blame and said it was all for the Nation's sake.

We can also point out that Moshe was not going to take the same People in as he took out. They failed as a People when they sinned with the spies and the generation died out in the desert. When Moshe failed as a leader to inspire the new generation he had to pass the torch. It was “abundant for *you*” but if the People, even one person perhaps, would have prayed for Moshe, then possibly the Kiddush HaShem would be reinstated and Moshe could resume leadership. No one did because that leadership connection was lost. So the anger was for their sake.

May we merit having faith in our leaders, to have our leaders make the correct decisions and actions, and in these days of consolation may we be led to the Promised Land that is governed according to the Torah, speedily in our days.