

## Parshat Shemini 5779

Sometimes, it can be difficult to admit that you have made a mistake. It is even more difficult for a leader or king. The reason for this is because when someone is in an exalted position of power, it can be especially hard to accept admonishment; especially from those 'beneath them'.

The Gemora in Zevachim 101a-b re-tells an argument that occurred in this week's Parsha between Moshe and Aharon (Vayikra 10.) It concerned whether Cohanim should be allowed to eat the Korban Chatas brought on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. These Cohanim were in a state of Aninut, which is the first stage of mourning, due to the recent deaths of נָדָב and אֶבְיָהוּא. Moshe supposed that they should eat the Korban regardless. He became angry with Aharon and the Cohanim for not doing so.

Aharon in turn explained to Moshe his reasoning. Rashi explains that Aharon 'spoke' to Moshe and: אֵין לְשׁוֹן דְּבוּר אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן עַז i.e. forcefully against Moshe. Moshe then admitted his mistake openly even though he was the leader and the person rebuking him was his brother. It can sometimes be harder to take criticism from ones own family.

Rashi says: Moshe wasn't embarrassed to admit he had forgotten the Halachah. Moshe did not say "I did not know this Halacha therefore it is not my fault that I made a mistake" to spare himself embarrassment. Rather he said "I did learn this, and I forgot it." The posuk continues: *It was good in his eyes*, : the fact that he was wrong made no difference to him as the most important thing was that the correct Halacha was put into practice.

The הכעס מביא לידי טעות; מי לנו גדול ממשה רבינו עליו השלום states: אורחות צדיקים י"ב: "Who is a greater man than Moses, our teacher? Moses became angry in three places, and he made 3 "mistakes".

- 1) This week's case
- 2) שמעו נא המורים and hitting the rock
- 3) ויקצוף משה על פקודי החיל: Where he became angry as he assumed the Israelites had kept Midianite women alive to have relations with them.

ועתה הבן: אם כך הגיע למשה רבינו עליו מה יגיע לכסילים הכועסים? continues: אורחות צדיקים

And now understand! If these occurrences happened to Moshe when he was angry, what can happen to fools who are angry! And therefore, Shlomo said, "Do not rush to become angry"

אֲשֶׁר נָשִׂיא יִחַטָּא וְעָשָׂה אַחַת מִכָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲלֵהֶיוּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂינָהּ בְּשִׁגְגָה וְאִשָּׁם: אוֹיְהוּדָע אֵלֶיךָ חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא בָּהּ וְהֵבִיא אֶת־קֶרְבָּנוֹ שְׁעִיר עִזִּים זָכָר תָּמִים. *When a ruler sins, and unintentionally commits one from among all the commandments of Hashem, which may not be done, incurring guilt; if the sin that he committed became known to him, he shall bring his offering: an unblemished male goat.* (Vayikra 4: 22-23).

Rashi says that אֲשֶׁר over here means 'fortunate', not 'when'. Fortunate is the generation that has a ruler who admits and atones for his unintentional sins. All the more so that he has regrets his intentional sins.

Why does Rashi need to say that is such a big deal when a ruler repents for his sins and that the ruler's nation is fortunate for this happening? Clearly, it is an important thing for a ruler to realise he has done something wrong. However, a ruler's realisation that he has erred is more special compared to a normal person because it can be even more difficult for kings and rulers to admit they've made a mistake.

But we have to realise that normal people can also find it hard to admit their mistakes.

Pirkei Avos (5:7) states that 7 things are found in a wise man. One of them is - "He confesses the truth". Kehati explains that when a person has a disagreement with his friend and the friend has a valid argument which proves that he is wrong, the person does not keep his side of the argument going with quibbles and fallacious arguments in order to score a point. Rather he acknowledges the truth and is not ashamed to admit his mistake.

Pirkei Avos (5:17) states: "Any dispute which is for the sake of heaven shall in the end be of lasting worth." When two people are involved in an argument, both of whom search for nothing but the truth and do not debate for the sake of argument or self-grandeur/honour, will eventually find the real answer and a permanent solution for the issue under discussion.

