

Parashat Chukat: Consequences of Murmuring and Complaining

The people of Isra'el, the whole community, entered the Tzin Desert in the first month, and they stayed in Kadesh. There Miryam died, and there she was buried. Because the community had no water, they assembled themselves against Moshe and Aharon. The people quarreled with Moshe and said, "We wish we had died when our brothers died before AD-NAI. Why did you bring AD-NAI's community into this desert? To die there, we and our livestock? Why did you make us leave Egypt? To bring us to this terrible place without seed, figs, grapevines, pomegranates or even water to drink?" Moshe and Aharon left the assembly, went to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces; and the glory of AD-NAI appeared to them. AD-NAI said to Moshe, "Take the staff, assemble the community, you and Aharon your brother; and before their eyes, tell the rock to produce its water. You will bring them water out of the rock and thus enable the community and their livestock to drink." Moshe took the staff from the presence of AD-NAI, as he had ordered him. But after Moshe and Aharon had assembled the community in front of the rock, he said to them, "Listen here, you rebels! Are we supposed to bring you water from this rock?" Then Moshe raised his hand and hit the rock twice with his staff. Water flowed out in abundance, and the community and their livestock drank. But AD-NAI said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not trust in me, so as to cause me to be regarded as holy by the people of Isra'el, you will not bring this community into the land I have given them."

As we look at these verses we might find several different reasons for us to be saddened. First we find that the entire community gathered together and instead of being thankful for what G-D had already done for them by bringing them out of the land of Mitzraim (Egypt) they chose to complain.

A second reason for sadness is that when they did realize that they had a need, in this case water, instead of turning to G-D for provision they look back at Egypt through perverted vision and instead of seeing slavery they saw a place where their physical needs were met.

A third reason we could be saddened is that they failed to see where they were was a blessing. G-D had delivered them, and brought them out and yet, instead of seeing their blessing they saw G-D deliverance as a curse, no figs, grapes pomegranates or water.

A fourth reason for our saddening when reading these verses could be that instead of looking to G-D for provision they rebelled against the man whom G-D had place over them.

The more we look at these verses the more opportunities we can find to be saddened by the reactions and responses of the Children of Israel as they arrived at Kadesh. As I read through these verses each of these reasons to be saddened become very real to me as I can look through my life and see how I have reacted of responded to life's uncertainties and challenges in very similar ways. However the part of this event that cause me the greatest sadness of heart is not what the people said nor is it what Moshe said but rather what G-D said to Moshe. G-D spoke these words

"Because you did not trust in me, so as to cause me to be regarded as holy by the people of Isra'el..."

"Because ye believed not in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel..." (JPS)

These words put into light a truth so many of us overlook. This truth is, that when we fail to demonstrate faith in G-D it does not effect only ourselves, it also effects those around us, because our actions diminish other peoples understanding of who G-D is. We make G-D seem weak and ineffective. We don't make G-D appear Holy and Sanctified to those around us. Our sins, when we miss the mark in our walk as believers does just that, you can almost hear G-D speaking to our hearts and saying: ***" Because you didn't believe in Me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people."***

It is hard for me to imagine any sadder statement to have spoken to us.