

Ascent to this mount of Abarim... and die on this mountain... and be gathered to your people... because you trespassed against Me among the Bnei Yisrael... because you did not sanctify Me among the Bnei Yisrael. (32:49,50,51)

Perhaps Moshe *Rabbeinu* could have sanctified Hashem more emphatically. Why, however, is this considered to be a transgression against the Almighty? Did Moshe's error constitute such an incursion against Hashem that hundreds of entreaties and prayers were not sufficient to effect his passage into *Eretz Yisrael*? Hashem refused to allow Moshe to enter the land, neither as a living being or as a corpse, as an animal or even an inanimate stone! He could not pardon Moshe's error! Moshe's behavior demanded serious consequences. Why?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, employs a practical approach to explaining this anomaly. Heads of state are provided with a security force to protect them. Ostensibly, this security force is comprised of trained, highly- skilled individuals whose function it is to protect their charge. They plan his trips, preparing the safest route to travel; they literally watch over his every moment of public exposure, insuring that no one can get close to inflict harm on him. Another, more select, group of security people are trained not only in protection, but also to be prepared to go one step further. Their function is to protect the head of state even with their own lives, if necessary. They must literally throw themselves down upon their charge, protecting him with their own bodies, willing to absorb or deflect whatever harm might be coming his way.

On one occasion, two such elite agents slacked off in their responsibility. An attempt was made upon the life of their charge and they did not literally throw themselves upon his body. Consequently, he was seriously wounded. They were brought before the magistrate for their breach of duty. The prosecutor sought to punish them with life imprisonment. After all, they had not protected their leader.

The defense attorney arose and delivered a moving speech before the jury. He described how the two defendants really did nothing different than the other members of the security force. When the assailant came forth from the crowd, intent upon shooting the President, no one else came forward to cover him with their own body. Why should they be singled out for guilt? These two men had devoted many years of exemplary service to their leader. Should they be held liable for not covering the President with their own bodies? They behaved no differently than any of the other security forces assembled at the time.

The words of the defense attorney made sense. The jury deliberated for a short while before returning their verdict. To everyone's shock and dismay, they found the defendants overwhelmingly guilty. Why? Had not the defense attorney shown in his brilliant argument that the two defendants had done nothing different than the other members of the security force? Why

should they receive such a stiff punishment? The answer is obvious. Indeed, the others had not shielded the President with their bodies, but that had not been their assignment. They were to remain in the outer periphery searching, on guard for anyone who might harm their leader. The two defendants, however, had the responsibility to shield the President, to throw themselves upon him, to give up their lives, if necessary, to protect their leader. They failed in their responsibility; they erred in executing their mission. Those who have more demanding responsibilities will be appropriately punished for neglecting to perform accordingly.

Moshe and Aharon were alike. They were enjoined to "protect" the Name of Hashem. Nothing, no incursion against the sanctity or integrity of Hashem's Name, could be tolerated. They were literally to "shield" the Almighty with their own bodies. They erred. On a single occasion, they acted in a manner unbecoming their lofty position. They could have been *mekadesh Shem Shomayim*, sanctified Hashem's Name to a greater degree, and they did not. They did not accede to their unique responsibility. A person is judged in accordance with his responsibility in life. Doing half a job is not sufficient for one who must always perform to a one-hundred percent level. The margin for error does not apply to individuals of the calibre of Moshe and Aharon.