

Because you trespassed against Me among the Bnei Yisrael at the waters of Merivas Kadesh....because you did not sanctify Me among Bnei Yisrael. (32:51)

Rashi attributes Moshe and Aharon's sin to their non-compliance with Hashem's original command to speak to the rock. Instead, they chose to strike the rock. The actual change did not elicit the punishment. It was, as *Rashi* explains, their failure to take advantage of an opportunity for increased *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name. Had Moshe spoken to the rock, Bnei Yisrael would have made a *kal v'chomer*, an *fortiori* argument. They would have reasoned: If a stone that does not receive reward or punishment listens to Hashem's command, should not we surely do so? **Horav Simcha Zissel Broide, Shlita**, observes that the only essential difference between speaking to the rock and striking it was in the level of *Kiddush Hashem* involved. The actual miracle of water flowing from a rock is basically the same in both instances. If Moshe would have spoken to the rock, however, the people would have had an opportunity to approach this miracle rationally. They could have delved into the underlying meaning of the experience in order to comprehend the significance of listening to the word of Hashem. They would have perceived intellectually, rather than visually. According to *Rashi*, this is the essence of *Kiddush Hashem*. When a person studies and is able to develop a more profound understanding of Hashem, thereby increasing his service to Him, he is embodying Hashem. Hashem's Name becomes sanctified when one studies with an *emes*, truth, when he seeks to advance and expand his comprehension of man's responsibility to serve Hashem. Had Moshe spoken to the stone, *Bnei Yisrael* would have inferred a *mussar haskel*, an ethical *Torah* lesson. He deprived them of this lesson when he, instead, struck the stone.

Seeing miracles are not the same if one does not use his mind to interpret them. Had *Bnei Yisrael* been privy to the miracle, but had not been able to cogently digest it, the lesson of the experience would not have been sustained. We have thought processes for a reason. One should make use of this ability to serve Hashem.