

"And Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock." (20:11)

A number of explanations are offered for the sin which Moshe *Rabbeinu* committed by hitting the stone rather than speaking to it. **Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl**, approaches the *pasuk* homiletically. As leader of *Am Yisrael*, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was responsible to handle the scepter of leadership in a pleasant manner. He needed to reach out, encouraging the people to follow in the right path, never admonishing them harshly or using physical force to emphasize a point. True, in their stubbornness, *Bnei Yisrael* may seem to have had hearts of stone. Their facade, however, could have been more successfully penetrated with verbal communication rather than with physical abuse.

The *Shechinah* speaks through the medium of *Klal Yisrael's* spiritual leadership. When Moshe struck the stone, he indicated that it was necessary for the *Shechinah* to use force to reprove His people. This was an inappropriate message, for Hashem is an all-merciful G-d, whose every act is a manifestation of His compassion.