

## **The people contended with Moshe, and they said, “Give us water that we may drink!” Moshe said to them, “Why do you test Hashem?” ... Moshe cried out to Hashem saying, “What shall I do for this people? A bit more, and they will stone me!” (17:2,4)**

The Torah says that the People “tested” Hashem. Where is this written? We only find that they asked for water. What really is wrong with asking for water when one is thirsty? Is this not the purpose of prayer – to supplicate Hashem for our needs? Furthermore, we find nowhere that Moshe *Rabbeinu* prayed to Hashem on behalf of the Jews. We do read in the Torah that he felt threatened by them. Why did he not entreat Hashem for water?

*Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, z.l.*, explains this with a parable. A student once came to a *yeshivah* for an entrance *bechinah*, exam, to ascertain his knowledge and ability, so that the *Rosh Yeshivah* could determine to which *shiur*, class level, he should be admitted. The *Rosh Yeshivah* asked him a number of questions, to which he received satisfactory responses. The *Rosh Yeshivah* said, “You have done well and will be placed in *shiur bais*. Now, I would like to ask you a few more questions that are more difficult.” The student was able to master these, as well. “Excellent,” exclaimed the *Rosh Yeshivah*. “You have been able to go up to *shiur gimmel*. However, I am not quite finished. I have a few more questions, even more penetrating than the previous ones.” The *Rosh Yeshivah* asked a few more questions. Once again, he was extremely pleased with the student’s responses. “I am very impressed with your ability,” said the *Rosh Yeshivah*. “You have once again been able to elevate your position to a higher class. We are prepared to accept you into *shiur daled*. I would, however, like to ask you a few more questions that are extremely difficult. These will determine for me your ability to be placed in yet a higher class.”

This was too much for the young student’s patience. He “lost it” and told the *Rosh Yeshivah*, “Perhaps the *Rosh Yeshivah* should attempt to answer the next few questions.”

Hearing this, the *Rosh Yeshivah* said to the student, “Why did you lose your patience? Do you think that I am asking you these questions because I do not know the answers? Trust me, I know the answers. I am doing this for you, to see if we might be able to elevate you to yet a higher class.”

This is a simple enough analogy, one which should enlighten us. Hashem tested *Klal Yisrael* for one purpose – so that they should demonstrate their spiritual ability. Could they be raised to a higher class? *Klal Yisrael* were acutely aware of Hashem’s ability to provide for them. The lack of water at this juncture served one purpose: to see if they were able to achieve even greater spiritual status.

Regrettably, they lost patience and said, "Where is our water?" This is similar to the student who challenged the *Rosh Yeshivah* and demanded that he respond by answering the questions. They tested Hashem. They should have realized that Hashem truly has all the answers. He was testing them for their sake. We now understand why Moshe did not pray to Hashem on their behalf. He knew that Hashem had water available for the Jews. He was only testing their ability to withstand even greater and more difficult spiritual tests.