

## Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice. (20:11)

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* struck the stone, instead of speaking to it, as per his instructions from Hashem, his actions were considered to be sinful. As a result, he was not permitted to enter into *Eretz Yisrael*. The commentators offer a number of different explanations to shed light on Moshe's error. *Rashi* says that altering Hashem's command from "speaking" to "striking" was wrong. Other commentators attribute the error to his reaction, the derogatory manner in which he spoke to the people: *Shimu na hamorim*, "Listen, you rebellious ones/fools." Whether the issue was becoming angry or referring to descendants of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, in such a disgraceful manner, our leader was held accountable.

The *Bas Ayin* coalesces both explanations. Moshe was acutely aware that Hashem had instructed him to speak to – not strike – the stone. Since he had spoken disrespectfully to the Jewish people, however, Moshe thought that he was no longer able to perform miracles using the words that emanated from his mouth. He had impugned the purity and integrity of his power of speech. Thus, he hit, rather than spoke.

This appears to be a rational reason for avoiding speaking. Why was Moshe held in contempt? The *Bas Ayin* explains that one should never despair from doing *teshuvah*. The power of repentance supersedes all; thus, it has the power to rectify any sin. Moshe could still have performed miracles with his words, had he "repented." This was his error.

The reason that *Ibn Ezra* advances is especially noteworthy. He explains that the critique against Moshe and the nation was that upon seeing water pour from the stone, their first reaction should have been to sing *shirah*, a song of praise, to Hashem. Instead, they drank and gave water to their animals. When we pray for a miracle and Hashem's response is positive, our initial response must be gratitude – not first enjoying the fruit and only then saying, "Thank you." Our priority must always be acknowledging our Benefactor.