

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

The Far Reach of Chillul Hashem

RABBI ADI ROLAND
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

And Hashem said to Moshe and Ahron because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in front of the eyes of *Bnei Yisroel*, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land that I have given to them. (Bamidbar 20, 12)


The *passuk* reveals that if not for this sin alone, they would have gone into the land in order that it should not be said about them [that they were punished] like the sin of the generation of the wilderness that it was decreed on them that they shouldn't enter the land, so too was the sin of Moshe and Ahron... (Rashi, *ibid*)

The commentators ask, how can it be that this is **the** sin that prevented Moshe from going into the *Eretz Yisroel*? All the way back at the end of *Shemos*, Rashi quotes the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (111a) that because Moshe *Rabbeinu* questioned Hashem for having originally sent him to Paroh, Moshe would not merit to see the destruction of the other kings in *Eretz Yisroel*, as he would not be allowed there with *Bnei Yisroel*!?

The *Ta"z* on Rashi in his *sefer Divrei Dovid* offers an extraordinary insight. He explains that really it was decreed way beforehand that Moshe would not enter the land. However, since afterwards, almost three years later, *Bnei Yisroel* sinned and were punished by not being permitted to enter the land as well, other people might equate *Bnei Yisroel* with Moshe *Rabbeinu* in that they both sinned with the incident with the spies. Since this erroneous comparison would lead to a *chillul Hashem*, a desecration of God's Name, by suggesting that the leader of *Bnei Yisroel* himself did not want to go into the land, Moshe's punishment should have been altered in

order to avoid any *chillul Hashem*, just as after the sin of the golden calf, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was able to rescind *Bnei Yisroel's* verdict of immediate destruction and have it changed to a more drawn out punishment to avoid a *chillul Hashem* (see Rashi *Shemos* 32:34). However, because this sin of hitting the rock was done publicly in front of all of *Bnei Yisroel*, everyone would realize that Moshe was not entering the land because of this sin and NOT the sin of the spies, thereby avoiding a possible *chillul Hashem* and thus retaining his original verdict way back from *Shemos*.

This is truly a remarkable observation! Even though Moshe *Rabbeinu* himself was unable to rescind the decree of him not entering the land, although he fervently davened for it many times, the mere **possibility** of a desecration of Hashem's Name because of an erroneous comparison of Moshe to the generation of *Bnei Yisroel* in the wilderness would've warranted the changing of Moshe's decree. How careful must one be to ensure his actions don't lead to even the slightest possibility of a *chillul Hashem*!

And if this is how far the desecration of Hashem's Name goes, one can only imagine the near-infinite reach when we truly sanctify the Name of Hashem! 




THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Shimon, a yeshiva student, returned to his dormitory room late one night, and was very thirsty. He picked up a cup from a table in the room, filled it with water, and drank it. As he was drinking, he tasted a bitter taste, but payed it no heed. In the morning, when everyone woke up, the strange truth became clear: Shimon drank up his friend's contact lenses which were soaking in lens solution!

Q Must Shimon compensate his friend for the contact lenses, or, since he had no idea that the cup he drank from contained the contacts, he should be exempt from compensation?

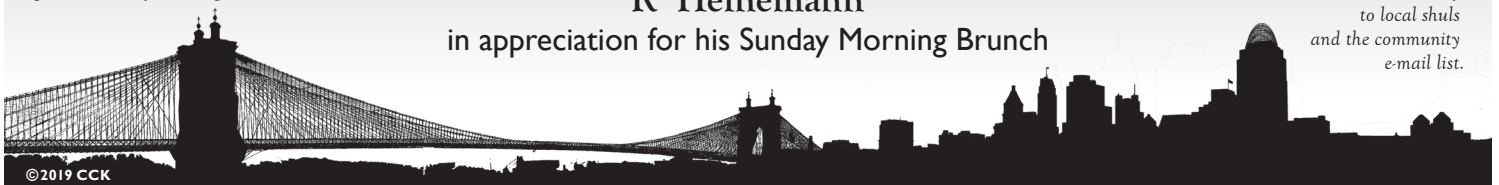
A I asked this question to my brother-in-law, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, who ruled that Shimon must pay, because of the rule, *adam muad li'olam*, a person is always considered "warned" and prone to damage others, and he must pay even for unintentional damages. Furthermore, he tasted the bitterness in his mouth, and he should have suspected something was amiss. Therefore, his damage would almost be considered intentional.

However, my father-in-law, Rav Elyashiv ruled that Shimon is exempt from recompense for three reasons: 1) The act was not done in the typical damaging fashion, rather in an act of drinking. 2) He had no clue that there were contact lenses in the cup, and he is considered an *oneis* (lit. forced, meaning completely faultless). 3) The owner of the lenses is the guilty party for leaving an expensive item in a cup in a public area, and he's culpable for his own loss. 

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GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

ZACH WAS AN EDUCATIONALLY CHALLENGED BOY whose difficulty with learning led to disruptive behavior in the classroom, and Zach's parents were forced to seek alternatives to mainstream schooling. They found the Glyndon Institute for Torah and Technology (G.I.F.T.), and while they thought this was the answer to their problems, Zach's self-esteem had been so shattered that even in an environment that was made for him he could not put things together and was still not succeeding. The boys of G.I.F.T. had a point system that they used as an incentive program for quality behavior in the classroom. All the boys' totals would be tallied at the end of the day by one of the staff members. One day Zach was sitting in Mr. Cohen's office, talking to him as he tallied up everyone's points from that day, when Mr. Cohen, who knew that Zach had recall difficulties, asked him to remember the number 92 as he would need it later and wanted to make sure to remember it. Over the course of Zach's visit to Mr. Cohen, he was asked several times for the number he had been asked to remember and each time he successfully answered 92. As Zach got up to leave, Mr. Cohen pointed out that he had just accomplished something that had always been a difficult thing for him, namely recollecting information. "Let's use this number 92 as a code to remember that you can continue achieving and surmounting obstacles, Zach, because this is just the beginning." Zach was excited by the idea, and the implementation of

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it lit a fire under Zach to throw himself into his schoolwork with a vigor that he had never had before. Even in Gemara class which had always been Zach's weakest point, he began to see improvement, and eventually one day, Zach knocked on Mr. Cohen's office door. He wanted to show Mr. Cohen a test that had just been graded from gemara class. Mr. Cohen opened his door and saw Zach in tears holding his test. In red ink at the top of the

page was the grade he had just received. It was a 92. 📖

A PARASHA Q 4 U
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Name two sets of brothers mentioned in this week's parasha.

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 📖

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

A serious problem that *Rabbonim* in America faced was the declining observance of the laws of family purity, including the use of a *mikvah* (ritual bath). Beyond the general state of laxity in *mitzvah* observance, an additional problem was that *mikvaos* in large cities were often located in public baths and therefore not a comfortable setting. Coupled with this issue was a widespread misconception, due to lack of knowledge of laws of *mikvah*, that people could use the bathtubs in their own homes. One attempt to educate the Jewish public on this issue was made by Rabbi David Miller, then of Oakland, California, who wrote, published, and distributed for free, a book titled *The Secret of the Jew*. Rabbi Miller had been raised and educated in Europe and had held Rabbinic positions in New York and Rhode Island. He left the Rabbinate within several years and moved to Oakland, where he was highly successful in real estate and a construction business. He became wealthy and personally funded many initiatives to strengthen Jewish practice in Oakland, as well as donated significantly to *yeshivos* in America and Europe. 📖

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Rabbi David Miller (1869 – 1939) A Forgotten Fighter for Orthodoxy." http://personal.stevens.edu/~llevine/david_miller_jp.pdf
Schwartz, HaRav Gedalia Dov. "Shaarei Gedulah." PP. 195. Chicago Rabbinical Council. 2007.

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL