

Parshat Chukat – The Power of Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Parshat Chukat discusses the story of *Mei Meriva*. Hashem told Moshe to speak to the rock to draw out water, unlike previous occasions when He told him to hit the rock. Moshe spoke to the rock. When nothing happened, he panicked and hit it, under pressure from the Jews who were desperate for water. Hashem then told him, "You could have sanctified me and you didn't." This is tragic enough, but much later in the Torah we find that Moshe blames the Jews for his not entering Israel. How do we understand his puzzling passage?

The Ramban explains that the episode of the spies ended so tragically because there was a flaw in the Jewish people's *emunah*. Had they held on a little longer when Moshe spoke to the rock, they would have learned the power of prayer. You could ask and not get the answer you want right away, and you could wait and hope and have trust. If the Jews would have learned that lesson then they would have never sent the spies. The commentators explain that had Moshe taken the Jews into Israel, everything would have been different. The *Beit Hamikdash* could have never been

destroyed. But that's only a blessing if we're on a level to live up to it. Moshe realized that the reason why we weren't on that level, the reason why we failed so miserably, was because he didn't teach us the power of prayer. That tells us that prayer is not only a consequence of having trust in Hashem, but a cause of it. Listening to the words of *tefilah* builds *emunah*. It also sharpens your spiritual eye so that you notice when you do get what you pray for. It may not be at the moment and sometimes not in the same form you wanted.

Propheteering – Selections From Trei Assar: Calls From Heaven

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

The prophet Tzifanya lived circa 639 BCE in the era of king Yoshiyahu. Not much is known about his background other than that he stemmed from a righteous, royal, lineage dating back four generations to king Chizkiyahu. Tzifanya was a contemporary of Yirmiyahu and Chulda the prophetess. Although they all prophesied a similar message, Tzifanya preached in the synagogues and study houses. He spoke to the affluent and the learned, while Yirmiyahu spoke to the masses in the marketplace. Chulda prophesied to the women. Tzifanya was the ninth of the Trei Assar. He was powerful and wealthy and one of the last prophets of the first temple to predict its destruction. It is not known what happened to him in the end. Perhaps he died in Israel or was exiled to Bavel.

Tzifanya prophesied about the *Yom Hashem*, the day of judgment, as did the prophets Nachum and Chavakuk. They saw a threatening power looming on the horizon which would destroy not only the land of Judea, but also its surrounding areas. Unlike Amos and Micha, who championed the cause of the poor and the downtrodden, Tzifanya's chief concern was the downfall of the wicked nations and the salvation of the remnant of Israel who would somehow survive during the difficult period of Hashem's judgment.

Tzifanya predicted the destruction in graphic detail. He saw the demoralization that was

present among the privileged classes who slavishly aped the foreign customs and practiced idolatry fostered by the evil king Menashe. There's no doubt that his influence affected king Yoshiyahu's decision to sweep the idolatry out of the land. Clearly Tzifanya, like many of the other prophets, was devoted to his people. Thus he battled against assimilation. He railed against wealth and luxury and the pursuit of money. He said that salvation would not come from the upper strata of society, but from the poor and the humble. Tzifanya seems to be more detached than Yirmiyahu, who suffered together with the people. His theory may have been that staying distanced from the prophecies of punishment would bring about a change of heart in the people.

Some commentators explain that the name Tzifanya hints to his mission as a prophet, as it says in Yirmiyahu, "The evil will come from *tzafon* (the north)." This refers to the Babylonian conquest of Israel. Although Bavel is not north but east of Israel, they came from the north because going from east to west would have involved traveling through very difficult desert terrain. Tzifanya's name also comes from the root words, *zafun kah*, meaning this prophet revealed things that had been hidden.

The fact that the book of Tzifanya was canonized, means that His prophecy wasn't limited to his generation but to all future generations. Tzifanya stood before a people who had never faced destruction on a national

level. On the *Yom Hashem*, the day of judgment, everything would be devastated. But he comforted the Jewish people that they would rebuild. And in fact the great miracle of the Jewish people is that they continue to rise again each time their enemies attempt to eradicate them.

Tzifanya, like his contemporaries Yirmiyahu and Chavakuk, prophesied that the Kasdim would launch a terrible war. This was in essence a wakeup call from Hashem. There's a famous parable of an artist who climbed up the peak of a mountain to paint a picture. When he finally completed his work of art, he stepped back to admire his work, not realizing that he was teetering almost at the edge of a cliff. A mountain climber who caught sight of him began shouting, but the artist sunk in the beauty of his painting, continue to back towards the precipice. The climber then dashed over and slashed the painting. The artist yelled, "What have you done?" The mountain climber pointed to the cliff and said, "Look where you were." *Navi* after *navi* came and warned the Jewish people to repent but they turned a deaf ear to all their pleas. Hashem then had no recourse but to destroy the *Beit Hamikdash*. When the nation saw the glorious edifice in flames, they awoke from their slumber. This is what Tzifanya prophesied. There would be terrible destruction and then the Jews would return, repentant, to Hashem.

Hilchot Shabbat V – Moving Muktza Items

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Gemara in Shabbat cites a disagreement whether *tiltul min hazad* (moving *muktza* indirectly) is permitted on Shabbat. Can you move a dead body that is lying outside to a more secure area on Shabbat? The Gemara cites a lenient position of Rabbi Chanina that you can place a non-*muktza* item such as a loaf of bread or a baby on the *meit* and then can carry it in. This dispensation is only for *kavod habriot* (out of respect for the body) and does not apply to other *muktza*. The Rosh seems to indicate that it applies more globally, but the *halacha* according to the Shulchan Aruch is that the leniency is only for *tiltul hameit*. Rabbi Yehuda says one can do *tiltul min hatzad*, i.e. slide the *meit* from one bed to another, because that is not considered *tiltul*. The dissenting opinion maintains that this type of *tiltul* is prohibited.

In another instance, the Gemara says that if a fire is raging in a house and there's a *meit* inside, you cannot move the body, as *tiltul min hatzad* is *assur*. Rav Yehuda says it can be moved because a person may be so anxious to save the *meit* that he may come to extinguish the fire, a potential *d'orayta*. The Gemara explains that the initial disagreement discusses a *meit* lying in the sun. In those circumstances, it's certainly *assur* and there are no Tanaim who permit one to bring in the *meit* without a non-*muktza* item on it. The principle that seems to emerge is that even for a *meit* you can't do *tiltul min hatzad* unless there's a potential risk of transgressing a *d'orayta*. Tosfot says this is the *halacha*. But if so, it raises several difficulties because the Gemara seems to rule the opposite in a number of other cases.

For example, the Gemara says you can tilt a pillow to shake money off it. You can incline a barrel so that the stone on top rolls off. You

can take out a wafer buried in coals, even if the coals get dislodged. The Rishonim explain that *tiltul min hatzad l'tzorech davar hamuttar* (moving *muktza* indirectly for the sake of a permitted item) is permitted. However, *l'tzorech davar hassur* (for the sake of a prohibited item) it is *assur*. Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch rules, if there are bones on the table that are not fit for animals to eat, you can tilt the table to make them fall off. Since you are not handling the *muktza* with your hands and you are not interested in the bones, but in the clean table, it is permitted. Similarly, although dirt is *muktza*, sweeping a tiled floor is *muttar* because you want the clean floor and not the dirt. On the other hand, sliding a wallet with a broom under the couch is prohibited, because your intention is to protect the money which is *muktza*.

The Gemara discusses a case of kindling straw that was left on a bed. Can a person lie down on the bed if it will cause the straw to move? The Gemara answers that you can't move it with your hands but you can move it with your shoulders. Rabbeinu Yonah asks, how can *tiltul* be permitted here if the person's intention is to protect the straw? The Rosh answers that there's a difference between moving with your body and with your hand. Moving something with your body *k'lachar yad* (in an unusual way) even for the sake of the *muktza* is *muttar*. So we see that the Rosh makes a distinction between *tiltul min hatzad* and *tiltul b'gufo*, moving something with one's body. The Ran raises the same question as the Rabbeinu Yonah and suggests a simple answer. Moving the straw is permitted because your main interest is not the straw, but the bed. Where your real intention is the *muktza*, even *tiltul min hatzad* would be *assur*. The Shulchan Aruch rules that moving something with a part of your body, even if your intention is to protect

the *muktza*, is permitted. The Mishna Berura concurs. This means that although you can't slide a dollar bill lying on the floor to the side with a broom, you may do it with your foot.

The Chazon Ish disagrees and holds that the *issur* of *tiltul* applies even *b'gufo*. However, if the movement of the *muktza* is a byproduct of a completely different action, it is permitted. When you move money with your foot it's not a byproduct, it's the action itself and that is prohibited. But in the case of lying down on a bed with straw, your action is defined as an act of lying down. If you happen to push the straw off with your body, that's ok. But to explicitly move *muktza* with any part of your body is prohibited. However, the consensus of most *poskim* is to be lenient like the Mishna Berura. Even so, Rav Moshe ruled that one shouldn't be *metaltel b'gufo l'tzorech hamuktza* unless it's really necessary. In summary, the consensus of most *poskim* is that *tiltul b'gufo* is permitted. *Tiltul al daver acher* is only *muttar* if it's *l'tzorech davar hamutar*.

There are different gradations regarding the status of broken *keilim* (vessels). A chipped vessel that is still useable may be moved on Shabbos. If it's totally unusable, it's *muktza*. According to Rabbi Shimon, if the vessel is not useable for its inherent purpose, but is usable for a different purpose, it's not *muktza*. A unique, valuable, button that the owner will tend to re-attach if it falls off, becomes nullified to the clothing and is not *muktza*. A standard button has independent status and is *muktza*. Broken eyeglasses that are still useable are not *muktza*. The part that broke off could be *muktza* because it's likely to be re-attached and so it doesn't have an independent status of a *keli*.