

Shaleeakh

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Vezot ha'Bracha "And this is the blessing" Devarim (Deuteronomy) 33:1- 34:12 22 Tishri 5767 - Oct. 14, 2006

By Rabbi Yaakov benYosef – ABOUT-Torah.org

The most dangerous part of sin is its ability to perpetuate beyond the domain of the sinner. For example, when a murder is committed the consequences spread into the whole community. This is because the act of murder not only affects the victim but also affects the victim's family and friends. As a result, the victim's family, coworkers and friends are no longer influenced by his or her presence. These individuals must cope with the loss of a unique part of their lives. Murder is not the only sin that has such far-reaching impact. A few of the other sins that affect individuals in a similar way are adultery, *leshon hara* (Slander), theft, and bearing false witness. In fact, any sin that occurs between two or more individuals has the potential to spread beyond the individuals directly involved with the sin. This is because sins between two or more individuals can easily become public knowledge. When a sin becomes public knowledge it becomes a danger to the welfare of the entire community. To minimize the impact these types of sins have on a community, HaShem commanded that they be dealt with publicly. Therefore, in the Torah we can see that murderers and adulterers were publicly stoned. False witnesses received the penalty of the accused and thieves were required to make public restitution. In the *Brit Hadashah* we can also see examples of the apostles

demanding that public sins be dealt with publicly for the welfare of the community.

Rav Shaul wanted an individual publicly removed from the Corinthian congregation for the congregation's welfare. We can see this in 1Corinthians 5:1-5, which states, **“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”** Demanding public removal was the only way for Rav Shaul to witness publicly to the congregation that there was no place for public sin in the Body of Messiah. In *Vezot ha'Bracha* we also see that public sin can also exist between a congregation and its leaders. When a congregational leader's sin is public he must also publicly bare the responsibility. We can see an example of this in HaShem's response to Moshe after he failed publicly to sanctify HaShem in front of the congregation.

Devarim 34:4-5 states **“the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto your seed: I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.”** After leading the Children of Yisrael to the Promised Land Moshe was condemned to die in the wilderness. The death of Moshe in the wilderness resulted from Moshe's public disobedience of HaShem. Moshe chose to strike the rock rather than speak to the rock. Moshe disobeyed HaShem in front of the entire congregation. Moshe failed to demonstrate to the congregation that obedience to HaShem is crucial for any individual striving for holiness. As a result, Moshe lost his witness to the congregation. He made it easier for the congregation to justify their disobedience. Therefore, HaShem had to demonstrate to the congregation that Moshe was not above the Torah. This we can see in *Bamidbar* 20:7-12:

“The LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shall bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shall give the

congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

Moshe was inflicted with public punishment as a witness to the Children of Yisrael that everyone, including congregational leaders, are subject to HaShem's authority. Even so, HaShem was gracious and allowed Moshe to see the Promised Land. Despite HaShem's grace Moshe was still responsible for His actions. Therefore, Moshe received the punishment HaShem had decreed.

Sins between two or more individuals threaten the whole community. Because these types of sins exist between individuals, they eventually become public knowledge. When these sins become public, the whole community is affected.. Public sins require public responses. Public response minimizes the damage of the sin, because it brings the sin out in the open. As a result, the nature and the damage of the sin are exposed.

Congregational leaders are particularly susceptible to inadvertently committing public sin. Because congregational leaders are a reflection of HaShem to the congregation, when a leader is disobedient to HaShem the leader loses his witness of HaShem. Therefore, HaShem's holiness is diminished in the eyes of the congregation. This happened to Moshe when he failed to obey HaShem explicitly. As a result, HaShem publicly disciplined Moshe. The public disciplining of Moshe established a witness to the Children of Yisrael that not even Moshe was above HaShem's authority.

By Rabbi Yaakov benYosef – ABOUT-Torah.org | [Newsletter Archives](#)

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