

HAAZINU 2002
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

At the end of the Torah portion, Haazinu, we learn how G-d tells Moshe to, "Come up to Mount Nebo," and how he will die there because he trespassed against G-d in the midst of the sons of Israel. It is interesting to note that the word trespass really means to embezzle. It is as if he stole something from G-d.

Earlier, in the Torah portion, Chukas, we learn how when Moshe Rabbeinu struck the rock, G-d said, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the sons of Israel, therefore, you will not bring this congregation to the land which I am giving them." It also mentions another time that because Moshe rebelled against the word of G-d, he would not enter the land of Israel. Why are these three expressions used? Here is uses the expression to embezzle. Earlier, it was the expression did not believe to sanctify Me, and the third time, it says that he rebelled against the word of G-d.

The Ramban says that when it says Moshe did not believe to sanctify Me, it does not mean that Moshe did not believe. It means that Moshe did not use

the correct means to cause G-d to be sanctified among the Jewish people. He struck the rock instead of talking to it. In other words, he was trying to force Judaism down the throats of people. That just does not work. You have to present the material in such a way that the people understand it and appreciate it. The people were thirsting for Torah. Mayim, water, also means Torah in Judaism, but Moshe presented it to them in a wrong way. He presented it in such a way that the people would surely rebel against it. That's what it says it was like he was embezzling from G-d. G-d gave him a good product, but he did not know how to present it to the people.

In this Torah portion, Haazinu, we also learn how we are to make a blessing before we learn Torah because, "When I call up the name of Hashem ascribe greatness to our Lord." There are only two times in the Torah that we are called upon to make a brocha. We say many brochas during the day, but all these are rabbinic. There are only two that are Biblical. One is the blessing we say after we eat, the benching. The other is the blessing that we say before the Torah. Why is it that the Torah has to say a blessing after we eat but not before we eat, and why is it that we say a blessing before we learn Torah and not after we learn Torah?

The answer, the rabbis teach us, is because everyone knows that before we eat, we are looking forward to eating and anxious for the food, but after we have eaten, we forget about it. Therefore, the Torah commands us to make a blessing to be grateful after we eat. When it comes to learning Torah and spiritual things, many times it is very hard to get started. Once we have learned Torah and engaged in spiritual things, they are very uplifting and wonderful. To start to do them, though, is very difficult. That's why we need to make a blessing before we read the Torah. We do not have to make a brocha before we eat, according to the Torah, although the rabbis say we should, because we are looking forward to eating. It is not the same with learning Torah. Many times, we do not look forward to it, but after we learn, we appreciate it and are elevated by it. Moshe was to instruct the people in Torah. In fact, he, himself, even say at the end of his poem, "Give your hearts to all the words which I am testifying to you today, that you are to instruct your children to be careful to perform all the words of this Torah." You have to instruct your children in such a way that they will want to do the Torah. King Cheeskeeyahu educated everybody in the Kingdom of Judah. He forced the Torah down their throats, so everybody knew the most arcane matters, but it did not stick because it did not touch their hearts. It is important that we teach our children the correct way. Moshe was not allowed to enter the land

of Israel because he could no longer convey Torah properly to the people.

Let us hope and pray that we will be able to so that the Torah will go on from generation to generation without any losses of young people.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who was talking to two friends. He asked them, "What would you like them to say about you in a hundred years?" The first man said, "I would like them to say that I was a good doctor and really cared about my patients." The second man said, "I would like them to say that I was a wonderful father and raised good children." They then asked the first man, "What would you like them to say about you?" He replied, "My, doesn't he look good for his age!" We know that for Judaism to be transmitted and be as fresh and inspiring as it was when the Torah was first given, it must be transmitted in a loving and kind way, showing our teenagers and young adults especially how it elevates their lives. Let us all hope and pray that we will all do so so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.