

PHILOTORAH

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לְפְצוּעֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה, וְלַנִּפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוֹר וְאַנְטִישִׁמְיוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם - עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel; may He end these wars with total success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.



YERUSHALAYIM in/out times for **CHUKAT**

ה' תמוז ה'תשפ"ו • June 19-20, '26

 **7:13PM** Plag  **6:19PM**  **8:30PM** R' Tam **9:00PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

PhiloTorah (311chu) - 1 - all at once file



Kiddush L'vana

With the announced molad emtza'i of Tamuz being on Monday, June 15th, the first opportunity for Kiddush L'vana this month is Thursday, June 18th. This is according to Minhag Yerushalayim, which is that one should strive to say KL at the first opportunity after 3 full days following the molad - and not to wait for Motza'ei Shabbat and not to wait for a minyan.

Most shuls will gather after Maariv on Motza"Sh Parshat Chukat (that would be Korach outside of Israel) to say KL.

Those who wait until after 7 full days following the molad will have their first opportunity to say KL on Monday evening, June 22nd.

30 days hath...

Every so often, I like to review some details of the Jewish Calendar, motivated by the idea that our knowledge of its details are in the spirit of the mitzva of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem - the word LACHEM indicating that our Calendar is a gift from HaShem to us. True, the main mitzva is directed towards the Sanhedrin, as representatives of Bnei Yisrael, but we should also know how it works.

Follow this:

The molad of Tamuz, as announced when we benched Rosh Chodesh, was on Monday morning, June 15th (the 30th of Sivan, the first day of Rosh Chodesh Tamuz).

But what would have been the situation if we had a Sanhedrin?

The committee of Sanhedrin in charge of Kiddush HaChodesh would calculate if the Moon would be visible to the naked eye on Monday evening. It would have determined that the Moon would be too young (only about 15 hours old when the Moon would set on Monday) to be seen. They wouldn't even sit in session to wait for eye-witnesses. Tuesday (our first of Tamuz) would not have been Rosh Chodesh. Rather, Wednesday would have been.

Let's get this straight. In our no-Sanhedrin calendar, Rosh Chodesh Tamuz was Monday and Tuesday. If we had a Sanhedrin, Rosh Chodesh would be on Wednesday.

So which is the REAL Rosh Chodesh? If you are asking about now, Rosh Chodesh Tamuz was Monday and Tuesday. Period. End of story. The fact that it would be different with a Sanhedrin is not relevant. Even though HKBH wants us to be active participants in setting up our Calendar, the (sad) fact is that we (temporarily) lost the Sanhedrin and

are relegated to Plan B - the Calendar based on mathematical calculations. Not the ideal but that's our fault.

There is an irony in all this. The Jewish month is supposed to run from New Moon to New Moon (rounded to days). Because we cannot see the Moon at molad-time and for 20-24 hours after it, the beginning of a month is actually delayed so that it can be declared by Sanhedrin, usually based on the testimony of two witnesses to the first visibility of the Lunar crescent. It turns out that when we set the calendar by the math, Rosh Chodesh is closer to the molad than when the Sanhedrin would declare it - but less desirable to HKBH because we are not, at the moment, active partners with Him in our calendar.

I've probably confused some of you, dear readers, but be consoled that there is more detail that I have left out which would be even more confusing.

One way or the other - Chodesh Tov.

Oh, I forgot to explain the title of this piece - 30 Days Hath...

I have found over many years, that most olim and visitors know very well how to continue 30 days hath September, April, June, and November... But many people don't know how many days hath Sivan or Tamuz, and even fewer know how many days in

Marcheshvan and Kislev. I've met a good number of fellow Jews over the years who have asked me to tell them their Hebrew birthdays.

Remember checks? When I used to use them, I would date them with the Hebrew date - officially accepted in Israel. Every so often, a store clerk would look at the date on the check and sheepishly ask me if that was today.

The Calendar is a gift from G-d which He gave us even before we officially became a Nation. Before He gave us the rest of the mitzvot. IMO, we should examine and know the ins and outs of that great gift.

Once again, Chodesh Tov.

CHUKAT



39th of 54 sedras;
6th of 10 in Bamidbar

Written on 159.2 lines; rank: 39

10 Parshiyot; 6 open, 4 closed

87 p'sukim; rank: 43rd

1245 words; rank: 40th

4670 letters; rank 41st

Smallest sedra in Bamidbar in lines, p'sukim, words, and letters

Fewer p'sukim than Sh'mini, more words, same number of letters.

Chukat is a bit longer.

MITZVOT

3 mitzvot of 613; all positive

Only 6 sedras (of the 54) have only positive mitzvot: B'reishit and Lech Lecha with 1 each, Metzora with 11, Chukat with 3, Pinchas with 6, Vayeilech with 2.

And again, to show the very uneven distribution of mitzvot in the Torah: Chukat has 3 (as do two other sedras). 26 sedras have more than Chukat; 25 sedras have fewer mitzvot. 3 is way below average (which is 11.4 mitzvot per sedra), but it is the median number of mitzvot in a sedra. About a third of the sedras have no mitzvot; about a third have more than 85% of Taryag; a little more than a third have less than 15% of the Torah's mitzvot. That also means that more than two thirds of the sedras have less than 15% of the mitzvot.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 17 p'sukim 19:1-17

[P> 19:1 (22)] This whole Aliya plus the first 5 p'sukim of the second Aliya deal with the topic of the PARA ADUMA. (These 22 p'sukim of Bamidbar 19 constitute the Maftir for Shabbat Parshat Para.)

The mitzva involves taking a cow with reddish hair (even two black or white hairs invalidate it), that is blemish-free (i.e. fit for the Altar even though the Para Aduma is NOT a korban; it is prepared away from the Mikdash and Har HaBayit, across the valley, on Har HaZeitim) and that has not worn a yoke or carried a burden for people. (If it carried upon its back something for its own benefit e.g. a blanket to keep flies away, it is still acceptable, but if it carried a blanket for its owner's convenience, it cannot be used as a Para Aduma.) Elazar b. Aharon was in charge of the preparation of this first Para Aduma.

SDT: "And G-d spoke to Moshe and Aharon saying... DABEIR (you Moshe, not both of you, not DAB'RU) to the children of Israel... Only Moshe could tell the people about the PARA ADUMA, which is an atonement for the Sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon was too involved in the Golden Calf episode. He didn't tell this mitzva to the people and he didn't prepare the PARA ADUMA; his son Elazar did. Yet

the pasuk tells us that G-d spoke to both Moshe and Aharon. Perhaps this contains a private rebuke by G-d to Aharon... And/or perhaps a bit of the opposite, since Aharon IS included in the command to prepare the Para Aduma.

SDT: Rashi says that the mitzva is for the assistant Kohen Gadol to tend to the Para Aduma, although any kohen qualifies. Commentaries see a symbolism in the son of Aharon doing it: just as the cow atones (so to speak) for her calf, so too the son atones for his father who was somewhat involved.

"Take a PARA ADUMA T'MIMA" T'MIMA usually means blemish-free, fit for the Altar. However, here the word T'MIMA is followed by the phrase "that has no MUM (blemish)", making the adjective T'MIMA superfluous. Therefore, we are taught that T'MIMA in this context is describing ADUMA, indicating that COMPLETE reddish hair is required. Without T'MIMA, a cow that was a "gingi" would be acceptable even if it had some non-red hairs. Not so, because of **ADUMA T'MIMA**.

As opposed to all korbanot in the Mikdash which had to be brought "inside" (the Beit HaMikdash area), the Red Cow is slaughtered and prepared "outside" (not even on Har HaBayit - across the valley on Har HaZeitim). It is not a korban, but it does have

korban-like features (e.g. blemish-free, atonement).

After the cow is slaughtered, it is burnt whole, some of its blood having been sprinkled towards the Mikdash first.

The complete process of the Para Aduma (including what is thrown into the fire, how the ashes are collected and how the potion is made) is a positive mitzva [397, A113 19:2] that has been fulfilled nine times, so far. The next (tenth) time will be in the time of the Moshiach.

A person who comes in contact with a dead body is rendered ritually impure for a seven-day period [398, A107 19:4]. The "Para Aduma Potion" is to be sprinkled on the defiled person on the third and seventh day.

Without this procedure, the state of ritual impurity remains forever.

It is most important to avoid entering the Mikdash (and eating of sacred foods) while one is defiled. Intentional violation is a (Divinely imposed) capital offense.

MITZVAnotes

Today, (temporarily) without a Beit HaMikdash, there are (at least) three ramifications of the rules of ritual impurity to the dead.

[1] A kohen must still avoid contact with a dead body (except those of his

close relatives for whom he sits shiva), even though he is already TAMEI. This is both for "practice" as well as not to "add" to his state of TUM'A.

[Note: The seven relatives for whom a person sits shiva and the seven relatives for whom a kohein may become tamei are almost - but not quite - matched. Father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, spouse. A kohein (and all Jews) sit shiva for those relatives, and a kohein can become tamei to all of those relatives, but not a sister who is married. In other words, a kohein sits shiva today for his sister, but if she is married, the restriction against being M'TAMEI still applies.]

[2] We are not permitted to go onto Har HaBayit in those areas where the Beit HaMikdash and its courtyard stood (or might have stood).

[3] Some gifts of the Kohen (such as t'ruma, t'rumat maaser, challa) are not given to a kohen, but are "disposed of" according to alternate halachic procedures, because of TUM'A of both the potential Kohen-recipient, as well as the giver, and the gift itself. Note that there are gifts to the kohen that pose no TAMEI problems; these are given today (e.g. Pidyon HaBen).

Levi - Second Aliya - 11 p'sukim 19:18-20:6

The Torah summarizes the Para Aduma procedures. Note that the cedar branch and hyssop are added to the potion as well as to the burning of the Para Aduma. Commentaries see special significance in the fact that the cedar is a lofty tree and the hyssop is a lowly shrub.

The dual nature of the Para Aduma potion (that it purifies the defiled and defiles the ritually pure) is counted as a mitzva of its own [399, A108 19:19]. And, it is this feature of the Para Aduma that is considered most mystifying and enigmatic.

Ponder this... As an analogy - there are certain medications for certain diseases, that when taken by a person with the disease, they are beneficial. Yet if a healthy person takes the same medication, he can get sick from it.

IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION:

All the people (kohanim, but some of the steps can be done by non-kohanim) involved in preparing the Para Aduma Potion - the one who slaughters the cow, the one who collects blood from it and sprinkles it towards Har HaBayit, the one who burns the carcass with the EITZ EREZ, EIZOV, and SHANI TOLAAT, the one who gathers the ashes, the one who puts the ashes into MAYIM CHAYIM to make the PAP (Para

Aduma Potion), one who touches the PAP - they all become Tamei. BUT the one who administers the SHPRITZ of the PAP on the T'MEI MEIT - if done properly, with proper KAVANA and without touching the water himself - he remains TAHOR. Commentaries variously explain the wording in the p'sukim, since on first reading, the P'SHAT seems to say that the MAZEH (shpritzer) becomes Tamei - but he does not; he remains Tahor. I hope that this clarifies rather than confuses the issue.

[P> 20:1 (6)] The next topic the Torah deals with is the death of Miriam in the Tzin Wilderness in Nissan (on the 10th of the month).

The Torah immediately tells us that the People had no water. (Midrashim speak of Miriam's Well that miraculously accompanied the People during their wanderings. This well disappeared upon her death, since it was in her merit because she had watched over Moshe at the river that we had the Well.) The People complain bitterly to Moshe and Aharon.

The custom of emptying out water containers in the room in which someone has died, comes from the sequence: "...and Miriam died ...and there was no water..."

Commentaries point out a connection between Para Aduma and the death of the righteous Miriam. Both are "instruments" of atonement.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 7 p'sukim 20:7-13

[P> 20:7 (5)] In response (to the complaint of no water), G-d tells Moshe to take the Staff, gather the People, and that he (Moshe) and Aharon should SPEAK to the rock in the presence of the People, so that the rock shall give forth its water for the People and their flocks.

Moshe gathers the People and admonishes them to witness another of G-d's miracles. He lifts the Staff and strikes the rock twice; water flows from it in abundance.

[S> 20:12 (2)] G-d is "angry" at Moshe and Aharon for missing a chance to sanctify His Name by having the People see water come from the rock by speaking to it. (The People had previously seen water come from a struck rock.)

G-d decrees that neither Moshe nor Aharon shall lead the People into the Land of Israel.

Because of the inclusion of Aharon in this decree, there is an implication that he was not punished for any involvement in the Golden Calf - a point that needed clarification. Rashi says that the Torah is telling us that Moshe and Aharon would have gone into Eretz Yisrael, except for this, and only this incident. Interesting that Moshe himself tells the people (in D'varim) that he carries some of the

blame for the Sin of the Spies. With Aharon's involvement in the Calf incident and Moshe's in the Spies episode, there is an interesting balance. On the other hand, Aharon IS held accountable in this case, even though it was Moshe who "acted".

G-d's decree seems excessively harsh on Moshe and Aharon. Commentators point to this as an example of how strictly G-d judges the greatest of our people. And the issue is a lot more complicated than that. It's not just 'punishment'.

Observation... Note that the rock gives forth water even though Moshe did not speak to it, as G-d had told him to. There are a few possibilities (maybe) as to why.

(1) It avoids a Chilul HaShem that would result if water did not come forth.

(2) Moshe Rabeinu was on the high level that he was able to control and divert nature (within limits). He had previously struck a rock to get water; this now is something he could do (and does).

(3) A twist on the Chilul HaShem possibility of (1) is that G-d wanted to avoid Moshe's losing face. G-d and Moshe are very much partners, so to speak, in the eyes of the People.

At the Sea, the people believed in "HaShem and in Moshe His servant, BASHEM UVMOSHE AVDO. In

contrast, the people's lack of faith is expressed as their talking against G-d and against Moshe, BEILOKIM UVMOSHE. These are the only two times the word UVMOSHE (and in Moshe) appears in all of Tanach - with opposite connotations.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 8 p'sukim 20:14-21

[S> 20:14 (8)] Moshe sends messengers to the Edomites, to recount Israel's brief history and request right of way through Edomite land. The request is denied. A second attempt is made to obtain permission; this too is strongly rejected. The People of Israel change their route in order to avoid confrontation with Edom (at G-d's command).

SDT: In asking for passage through Edom territory, Moshe's messengers state that the people "will not drink water of a well". Rashi says that we would have expected the Torah to say "the water of cisterns". Rashi explains that Edom had the cisterns; we had a miraculous well (and Manna for food). What we were offering Edom were the profits from selling us food and water. We had no need for their food and drink, but it was a proper offer to make. Rashi says that when staying at an inn, one should partake of the inn's meals rather than "brown bagging it" (not exactly Rashi's term). This increases the benefit to the inn-keeper and is a proper thing for a patron to do.

SDT: Moshe sends a message to Edom saying, "...you know all the trouble we had in Egypt." Imrei Shefer asks, how was Edom expected to know what happened to us in Egypt? The answer, he says, comes from Parshat To'l'dot, when Rivka sought out G-d to explain what was happening inside her. She was told that she would have twins and that they would grow to head great nations, and when one fell, the other would rise proportionally. Edom's life must have made a significant turn upward, says Imrei Shefer, during the dark years we spent in Egyptian servitude - so they know what had happened.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 17 p'sukim 20:22-21:9

[P> 20:22 (8)] The People travel from Kadesh to Hor HaHar. There Aharon is to die. Moshe takes Aharon and Elazar up the mountain, where the garments of the Kohen Gadol are transferred from Aharon to his son and successor. ALL the people mourn Aharon's death for 30 days.

COMMENTARIES POINT OUT that Aharon's death had elements that were missing in Moshe's later death. Seeing his son continue in his footsteps and being loved by all the people as Aharon was, adds a special dimension to Aharon's full life.

The Midrash says that the Heavenly

Clouds that protected the People, left upon Aharon's death.

We can see now that the miracles of the Midbar were each associated with one of our leaders: Moshe, the Manna; Aharon, the Clouds; Miriam, the Well.

[S> 21:1 (3)] That made them vulnerable to attack from Emori. The People of Israel made a pledge to G-d and the Emori attack was successfully countered by Israel.

[P> 21:4 (13)] The People then tired of their extended travels and complained once again to G-d and Moshe. Their tirade included gross disrespect to G-d's miracle of the Manna. For this they were punished by an attack of "fiery" (poisonous) snakes that bit many people, causing many deaths. The People repented and pleaded with Moshe to pray to G-d to spare them. G-d told Moshe to fashion a copper (the choice of copper was Moshe's and it was a play on words Nechoshet/Nachash) snake and mount it atop a staff, so that anyone who would see it would live.

The Mishna in Rosh HaShana (3:8) asks, "What? (The copper image of) a snake can kill or restore life?" Not so, says the Mishna. "Rather, when the People of Israel look towards the Heavens and subjugate their hearts to G-d, then they were cured; and if not, they would decay."

The Mishna in P'sachim (4:9) records that Chizkiyahu HaMelech destroyed

the Copper Serpent and the Sages approved of his actions. People were misusing it, and misunderstanding it.

This same kind of problem exists with the use of Korbanot in the time of the Beit HaMikdash, and in our time, amulets, Tashlich, Kaparot, visiting holy places, notes in the cracks of the Kotel, red threads around one's wrist, and even saying T'hilim - meaning that there are people who do certain things in lieu of heartfelt prayer and sincere kavanot, somehow expecting miraculous salvation. All of the above, to some extent, are meant to be incentive and inspiration to sincere repentance and prayer, not substitutes for them.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 11 p'sukim 21:10-20

The People continue their travels. They went to OVOT (identified as being due south of the Dead Sea). From there they went to "desolate passes" or "the ruins of AVARIM" (different understandings of the phrase IYEI HA'ARAVIM), along Moav's eastern border. They then continued on to NACHAL ZERED. Then to a part of the desert that was outside Moav territory (this because they were forbidden by G-d to encounter Moav.) These travels were recorded in the "Book of the Wars of G-d" (opinions differ as to what this was). Finally the people arrive at a place known as "the Well".

[S> 21:17 (4)] This was another significant event related to water. From a physical point of view, water is by far the most valuable "commodity" of the wandering Nation. On a spiritual level, water represents Torah and Life itself.

The "Song of the Well", a short but beautiful song is recorded, highlighting the preciousness of water. The words are filled with symbolisms and allusions.

The next piece of travelog is either part of the song at the well... or not. From the desert, the people went to Matana, from Matana to Nachliel, and from Nachliel to Bamot. From Bamot to HaGai in the field of Moav, on a cliff top that overlooks the Wastelands.

Notice that we have Songs over Water at both ends of the 40 years.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 16 p'sukim 21:21-22:1

[P> 21:21 (16)] As Israel nears the lands of Emori, requests are made for rights of passage. Not only are these requests denied, but Emori sends an army to confront Israel. Israel is completely victorious against King Sichon, and conquers the lands of Emori and Cheshbon. Further battles result in more Emori lands being conquered. Og, king of Bashan, also falls, as G-d promised.

SDT: It is important to note that Israel fights against whom G-d tells us to, and we do not engage in battle anyone that G-d forbids us to. It is irrelevant whether Edom was stronger or weaker than Emori. We didn't fight the latter and avoid the former for military reasons. G-d is our Commander-in-Chief. We must always keep this in mind.

SDT: Israel's military victories in the Midbar towards the end of the period of wandering, were very important for the morale of the people as they faced long years of many battles upon crossing the Jordan River into Eretz Yisrael. In the Midbar, they get a taste of G-d's promises and might.

Moshe sends Meraglim to Ya'zer.

RASHI says that the spies who were sent said, "we will not do as our predecessors did; we have complete confidence in the power of Moshe's prayer." In a way, the sending of these Meraglim is a TIKUN (repair) of the Sin of the Spies. Spies were often sent to help plan the nation's next step. They were not meant to decide on what G-d already had decreed.

The final pasuk in Chukat tells us that Israel traveled and arrived at Arvot Moav - this is their final stop before entry into Eretz Yisrael.

Note: We have four sedras of Bamidbar to go and eleven in D'varim, and we are already at Arvot Moav,

With the conclusion of Chukat, we have arrived at the threshold of Eretz Yisrael. Way back in Mikeitz we left the Land and went down into Egypt. Now we are readying ourselves to return.

Haftara - 33 p'sukim - Sho-f'tim 11:1-33

The haftara consists of most of the story of Yiftach, the at-first scorned, later sought after, son of Gil'ad. He was shunned by his "half-brothers" and fled to the Land of Tov where he lived a rogue's life. The people of the Gil'ad region are attacked by the Ammonites and they pursue Yiftach to be their leader.

In the description of the wars with Amon, reference is made to the historical background of the area - specifically, the episode recorded in the sedra about Israel requesting permission from Emori for passage through their territory. This is a major connection to the sedra. The story of Yiftach seems to be peripheral to the reason that Chaza"l chose this reading for Chukat.

And yet... the haftara ends with the first part of the story of Yiftach's vow and the resultant fiasco with his daughter. Chaza"l generally consider Yiftach to have erred; such a vow as his would be halachically invalid under the circumstances. The significance (if it does, in fact, connect to the sedra) of

the story of Yiftach's daughter vis-a-vis the sedra is elusive. Actually, there is the vow that the people - correctly - made prior to battle. Yiftach's was way off.

Notice that there is a run of four sedras whose names are three-letter words: SH'LACH, KORACH, CHUKAT, and BALAK. Significant? I doubt it.

Also, for KORACH, CHUKAT, BALAK there is a KUF as the first, second, and third letter in the name. Significant. Once again, I doubt it.

So why am I telling you this? Maybe it is good riddle material for kids or others at your Shabbat table.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Moving Forward - When Moving Together

**CHUKAT - 33 p'sukim
- Sho-f'tim 11:1-33**

The tradition of reading the haftara on Shabbat and Yom Tov was instituted during the Tanaitic period, as found in the Mishna [Megila 4:5], which indicates that the practice was well-established by then. Its institution was, according to many, the result of decrees of foreign rulers

who forbade public Torah readings. In response to these "diktats", Chazal then introduced the readings from Sifrei Nevi'im that would correspond to the weekly Torah portions, to be read in place of the banned public Torah readings.

Our Rabbi's institution of the haftara reading should keep us mindful of the past realities and history and its impact on our world. Reflecting upon the events of ancient Israel is especially important in understanding the weekly haftarot! This helps uncover the prophetic messages shared to that generation and its importance for us today. It is also why I often touch upon the preceding - or subsequent - events to better understand what the haftara teaches us.

The connection between the parasha and haftara is quite obvious, as the reading from the Sefer Sho-f'tim [perek 11] parallels and, indeed, even uses the exact wording found in the Parashat Chukat. The parasha relates how Israel avoided invading the nation of Ammon when conquering the land from Arnon to Yabok and the haftara tells of the argument of against the Ammonite enemy who demanded the return of the very same land, "from Arnon to Yabok" - although it was never taken from Ammon.

The haftara certainly recounts an

interesting clash (and eventual battle) between these two opponents. But it is far more than an "exciting" conflict.

It reveals a sad and difficult era that reflects the struggling of a failed generation.

Consider:

- Gil'ad is threatened by Ammon... but has no army to fight them.
- No neighboring tribes offered to help them.
- They reluctantly choose Yiftach - whom they had driven out from Gil'ad.

Yes, Yiftach was successful in repelling the enemy - was this a victory?

Consider the sad "epilogue" to this entire episode:

- After Yiftach's glorious victory, the tribe of Efrayim mustered an army and marched northward to confront the new leader.
- Upon reaching Yiftach, they threatened to burn down his house for never having summoned them to join him in the battle.
- The disagreement, led to a civil war between Yiftach's army and the army of Efrayim.
- That war that led to the deaths of 42,000 men of the tribe of Efrayim.

This horrific closing to the era of Yiftach (he ruled for only 6 years) grants us a peek into the condition of the nation at that time. Israel was divided! Unable to muster an army, they manage to gather only a group of malcontents (ANASHIM REIKIM). Even when victorious, the tribes did not contribute to the victory but thought only of themselves - not the nation as a whole. When granted respite from their enemies, when Israel was miraculously spared a predictable massacre, they still could find no common ground upon which to build a united nation.

History teaches us over and over again that the divisions within our people weaken us and, all too often, lead to heartbreak and misfortune. And, yes, once again, our haftara DOES, indeed, leave a message for us today.

The most dangerous menace that our nation confronts, is when we forget that we are one nation and, despite our differences, we can - and should - move forward.

But we can move forward only when we move together. ★



ParshaPix explanations



The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

KORACH

• and one Unexplained (not easy)

Weird equation: 250-250 = the Sun

MATAYIM VACHAMISHIM = 40+1+400 +10+40 (491) + 6+8+40+300+10+40 (404) = 895. Subtract 250, you get 645

HASHEMESH = 5+300+40+300 = 645.

CHUKAT

$(12+3) \times 4 \times 5 - 6 + 7 \times (-8+9) = \text{fire}$

$e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$

$\times 2$

$\times 2$

Kasherim & Tovelim metal vessels

Kermes vermilio

to Midbar Tzin to Hor HaHar into the sea

Interesting: 13 times in the sedra + another 6 times embedded, yet at one point they had none.

Photo of a real possible Para Aduma. If it is completely reddish - and stays that way, remain unblemished, and

never be worked 🐮 After Miriam's death, the Well dried up and there was no water for the people 🐮 Although Moshe was commanded to speak to the Rock (the rock's ear indicates that it was ready to listen), he struck it with the MATEH twice and water gushed forth from the rock(s) 🐮 Kohen Gadol with the garments that were transferred from Aharon to Elazar 🐮 The people panicked and a plague of serpents attacked the people. G-d told Moshe to put the form of a snake on a rod (which he did, making the snake from copper) and anyone bitten by a poisonous snake who looks at the snake-on-the-stick would live. Known as the Rod of Asclepius - from Greek mythology, its origin as a symbol of medicine and healing is really from Parshat Chukat. The caduceus, also from Greek mythology, has two snakes and wings and is often used as a symbol of the medical profession, but that is a mistaken association. 🐮 SEFER MILCHAMOT HASHEM, perhaps some kind of written record of the battles or possibly a cryptic term for the Torah. It is represented by the open book with a tank on one page and the HEI-apostrophe on the other 🐮 DO NOT ENTER sign has a double-double meaning. Edom and Emori both responded to Israel's request for safe passage through their territory with DO NOT ENTER. Moshe and Aharon, as a result of the

"hitting the rock rather than talking to it episode", were given DO NOT ENTER orders for Eretz Yisrael 🐮 Bottle of water marked 5NIS represents the offer Bnei Yisrael made to pay for the water they would use while passing through Edom's land 🐮 Well with the musical notes for the Song of the Well 🐮 Math expression using the digits 1-9 in order and a bunch of operation-symbols totals 301, the gimatriya of EISH, fire. That is what the expression is equal to in the ParshaPix, and altogether represents the phrase, "For a fire has come out of CHESHBON..." 🐮 MELECH CHESH-BON, i.e. the math king. Emori's king Sichon is also referred to as MELECH CHESHBON, as in the haftara of Chukat. (In Chukat, there is reference to Sichon Melech HaEmori, who sits in (the city of) Cheshbon. For the title of Math King, Google seems to say that it would be Leonhard Euler (pronounced 'oiler') - hence, we have crowned him MELECH CHESH-BON. With his picture is one of his math discoveries, which many mathematicians consider to be the most beautiful equation in math 🐮 Logo of Chevrolet. As we read in Bamidbar 21:1, "And when king Arad the Canaanite, who lived in the Negev, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atarim; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners." The term in the pasuk for

prisoner or captive is SHEVI, i.e. CHEVY as in CHEVROLET 🐮 picture of one of the most famous clowns of the past in America, Emmett L. (Leo) Kelly - as in ...MAYIM CHAYIM EL KELI. In addition, his first name Emmett fits with the different examples of CHESED SHEL EMET (Emmett - EMET, get it?) in Parshat Chukat, in burying of Miriam and Aharon 🐮 The four graphic elements along the bottom, from left to right are a gift-wrapped box representing the place - whose identity is disputed by various scholars - called MATANA. From MATANA, the Torah tells us, the people traveled to NACHLI'EL. The bird the arrow points to is a Wagtail, known in Hebrew as a Nachli'eili (minus the E sound at the end of the word). From there, via another arrow, the people traveled to BAMOT, either a place name or just the high places. In modern Hebrew, BAMOT are stages. Pictured is a stage times 2 to get the plural. From there, via yet another arrow, to HAGAI, which we are taking as HA (the) GAI (maybe a valley of sorts). The picture is one of Guy Smiley, a Muppets character 🐮 The people complain of their thirst with these words: "And why have you made us come out of Egypt, to bring us in to this evil place? This is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink." Here are those same three fruits that the Meraglim

brought back from their tour of the Land. Think of the extra slap in the face that this represents 🐘 The picture of the mountain in Jordan that is thought to be HOR HAHAR 🐘 The young fellow in the picture is GILAD (dressed up as Harry Potter), as is mentioned in the haftara. 🐘 Mohammad Ali and a teddy bear stand for ALI-B'EIR from the song of the well. 🐘 there are pictures of a cedar tree and a hyssop plant - two items thrown into the burning of the Para Aduma 🐘 the egg yolk is for the YOKE (or any burden) that will invalidate a red cow from being a PARA ADUMA 🐘 Kashering & Tovelng metal vessels from Parshat Matot is the only other mitzva that the Torah calls ZOT CHUKAT HATORAH 🐘 Kermes vermilio is a species of scale insect (TOLAAT SHANI) that feeds on trees. It is the source of the dye crimson 🐘 Tuesday is the third day and Saturday is the seventh day, but they are crossed out, because they are not the 3rd and 7th day of the seven days of ritual impurity for a T'MEI MEIT, on which the person must be sprinkled with the PAP (Para Aduma Potion) in order to become TAHOR after mikve on the seventh day and after stars out, ending seven full days. 🐘 There are two words in the sedra that end with two letters, each with a SH'VA under it. In 20:11, we find the word VATEISHT - and the People and their

flocks drank (water from the rock that Moshe hit twice). In 21:1 we find the word VAYISHB - And they took a captive (the K'naani from Israel). 🐘 Interesting: 13 times in the sedra + another 6 times embedded, yet at one point they had none. MAYIM. The word occurs 13 times in Parshat Chukat. Another 6 times, MAYIM is embedded in other words - 4 times in YAMIM, once in P'AMIM, once in PAAMAYIM. And after Miriam's death, they had no MAYIM. 🐘 the monkey, KOF in Hebrew, is close-sounding to the letter KUF. Last week's sedra, Korach, has a KUF as the first of its three-letter name. Chukat has a KUF in the middle, and Balak has a KUF in the third position. 🐘 and one Unexplained

לע"נ
 הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל
 Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Why Was Moshe Not Destined to Enter the Land?

CHUKAT

It is one of the most perplexing, even disturbing, passages in the Torah. Moshe the faithful shepherd, who has led the Israelites for forty years, is told that he will not live to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land.

No one has cast a longer shadow over the history of the Jewish people than Moshe - the man who confronted Pharaoh, announced the plagues, brought the people out of Egypt, led them through the sea and desert and suffered their serial ingratitude; who brought the Word of God to the people, and prayed for the people to God. The name Israel means "one who wrestles with God and with men and prevails". That, supremely, was Moshe, the man whose passion for justice and hyper-receptivity to the voice of God made him the greatest leader of all time. Yet he was not destined to enter the land to which he had spent his entire time as a leader travelling toward. Why?

The biblical text at this point is both lucidly clear and deeply obscure. The facts are not in doubt. Almost forty years have passed since the Exodus. Most of the generation who remembered Egypt have died. So too had Miriam, Moshe's sister. The people have arrived at Kadesh in the Tzin desert, and they are now close to their destination. In their new encampment, however, they find themselves without water. They complain. "Why have you brought the Lord's assembly into this wilderness only for us and our livestock to die here? Why did you take us up out of Egypt to bring us to this dreadful place with no grain, no figs, no vines

or pomegranates - there is no water to drink!" (Bamidbar 20:4-5). The tone of voice, the petulance, is all too familiar. The Israelites have hardly deviated from it throughout. Yet suddenly we experience not *deja-vu* but tragedy:

Moshe and Aharon went away from the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. They fell on their faces, and the Lord's glory was revealed to them. And the Lord spoke to Moshe: "Take the staff, you and your brother Aharon, and assemble the community. Speak to the rock before their eyes and it will give forth water. You shall bring forth water for them from the rock, giving the community and their animals to drink." Moshe took the staff from before the Lord, as He had commanded him. And Moshe and Aharon gathered the assembly together before the rock. He said to them, "Listen now, rebels! Shall we produce water for you from this rock?" Then Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their animals drank. But the Lord said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not put your trust in Me to demonstrate My holiness in the Israelites' eyes, you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I am giving them." (20:6-12)

Where had Moshe gone wrong? What

was his sin? What offence could warrant so great a punishment as not to be privileged to see the conclusion of the mission he had been set by God?

Few passages have generated so much controversy among the commentators. Each offers his own interpretation and challenges the others. So many were the hypotheses that the nineteenth century Italian exegete R. Shmuel David Lutzatto was moved to say, "Moshe committed one sin, yet the commentators have accused him of thirteen or more - each inventing some new iniquity!" One modern scholar (R. Aaron Rother, Shaarei Aharon) lists no less than twenty-five lines of approach, and there are many more.

The following are the most significant: Rashi, offering the simplest and best-known explanation, says that Moshe's sin lay in striking the rock rather than speaking to it. Had Moshe done as he was commanded, the people would have learned an unforgettable lesson: "If a rock, which neither speaks nor hears nor is in need of sustenance, obeys the word of God, how much more so should we."

Rambam says that Moshe's sin lay in his anger - his intemperate words to the people, "Listen now, rebels." To be sure, in anyone else, this would have been considered a minor

offence. However, the greater the person, the more exacting are the standards God sets. Moshe was not only a leader but the supreme role-model of the Israelites. Seeing his behaviour, the people may have concluded that anger is permissible - or even that God was angry with them, which He was not.

Ramban, following a suggestion of Rabbeinu Chananel, says that the sin lay in saying, "Shall we produce water for you from this rock?" - implying that what was at issue was human ability rather than Divine miracle and grace.

R' Yosef Albo and others (including Ibn Ezra) suggest that the sin lay in the fact that Moshe and Aharon fled from the congregation and fell on their faces, rather than standing their ground, confident that God would answer their prayers.

Abarbanel makes the ingenious suggestion that Moshe and Aharon were not punished for what they did at this point. Rather, their offences lay in the distant past. Aaron sinned by making the Golden Calf. Moshe sinned in sending the spies. Those were the reasons they were not privileged to enter the land. To defend their honour, however, their sins are not made explicit in the biblical text. Their actions at the rock were the proximate rather than underlying cause (a hurricane may be the

proximate cause of a bridge collapsing; the underlying cause, however, was a structural weakness in the bridge itself).

More recently, the late Rav Shach zt"l suggested that Moshe may have been justified in rebuking the people, but he erred in the sequence of events. First he should have given them water, showing both the power and providence of God. Only then, once they had drunk, should he have admonished them.

Difficulties, however, remain. The first is that Moshe himself attributed God's refusal to let him enter the land to His anger with the people, not just with himself: "At that time, I pleaded with the Lord: 'O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand; what force in heaven or earth can do deeds and mighty acts like Yours! Please let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon.' But the Lord was enraged with me because of you, and would not listen to me. (D'varim 3:23)

Similarly, T'hilim 106:32 states, "By the waters of Meriva they angered the Lord and trouble came to Moshe because of them."

Second: however we identify Moshe's sin, there is still a disproportion between it and its punishment.

Because of Moshe's prayers, God forgave the Israelites. Could He not forgive Moshe? To deprive him of seeing the culmination of a lifetime's efforts was surely unduly harsh. According to the Talmud, when the angels witnessed Rabbi Akiva's death, they said, "Is this the Torah, and this its reward?" They might have asked the same question about Moshe.

Third is the tantalising fact that, on a previous occasion in similar circumstances, God had specifically told Moshe to take his staff and strike the rock: precisely the act for which (for Rashi and many others) he was now punished:

But the people were thirsty for water. They railed against Moshe, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Was it to kill me, my children, and all my livestock by thirst?" "What shall I do with this people?" Moshe cried to the Lord. "Another moment and they will stone me." The Lord answered Moshe, "Walk out to face the people taking some of the elders of Israel with you. Take the staff with which you struck the Nile in your hand, and go. I will be there before you by the rock at Chorev. Strike the rock; water will come out of it and the people will drink." (Sh'mot 17:3-6)

It is with the deepest trepidation that one hazards a new explanation of so debated a text, but there may be a

way of seeing the entire episode that ties the others together and makes sense of what otherwise seems like an impenetrable mystery.

The Talmud (Avoda Zara 5a) contains the following statement of Reish Lakish:

What is the meaning of the verse, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam'? Did Adam have a book? Rather, it teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam (in advance), each generation and its interpreters, each generation and its Sages, each generation and its leaders.

One of the most striking features of Judaism is that it is not centred on a single figure - a founder - who dominates its entire history. To the contrary, each age gave rise to its own leaders, and they were different from one another, not only in personality but in the type of leadership they exercised. First came the age of the patriarchs and matriarchs. Then came Moshe and his disciple Yehoshua. They were followed by a succession of figures known generically as Sho-f'tim (Judges), though their role was more military than judicial. With Shaul, monarchy was born - though even then, kings were not the only leaders; there were prophets and kohanim as well. With Ezra a new figure emerges: the 'Scribe', the teacher as hero. Then

came elders, Sages, masters of halacha and aggada. During the Mishnaic period the leader of the Jewish people was known as Nasi (and later, in Babylon, as Reish Galuta or Exilarch). Chatam Sofer, in one of his Responsa (Orach Chayim 12) notes that though the Nasi was a scholar, his role was as much political as educational and spiritual. He was, in fact, a surrogate king. The Middle Ages saw the emergence of yet more new types: commentators, codifiers, philosophers and poets, alongside a richly varied range of leadership structures, some lay, some rabbinic, others a combination of both.

Leadership is a function of time. There is a famous dispute about No'ach, whom the Torah describes as 'perfect in his generations'. According to one view, had No'ach lived in a more righteous age, he would have been greater still. According to another, he would have been merely one of many. The fact is that each generation yields the leadership appropriate to it. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 21b) says that Ezra was worthy of bringing the Torah to Israel, had Moshe not preceded him. In another passage (Menachot 29b) it says that Moshe himself asked God to give the Torah through Rabbi Akiva rather than himself. One can speculate endlessly about the might-have-beens of history, but we are each cast into the world at a time not of our

choosing, and we have no choice but to live within its particular challenges and constraints. For that reason, we do not compare leaders, for there are no timeless standards by which to judge them. "Yerubaal in his generation was like Moshe in his generation; Bedan in his generation was like Aharon in his generation; Yiftach in his generation was like Shmuel in his generation."

Each age produces its leaders, and each leader is a function of an age. There may be - indeed there are - certain timeless truths about leadership. A leader must have courage and integrity. He must be able, say the Sages, to relate to each individual according to his or her distinctive needs. Above all, a leader must constantly learn (a king must study the Torah "all the days of his life"). But these are necessary, not sufficient, conditions. A leader must be sensitive to the call of the hour - this hour, this generation, this chapter in the long story of a people. And because he or she is of a specific generation, even the greatest leader cannot meet the challenges of a different generation. That is not a failing. It is the existential condition of humanity.

The remarkable fact about Moshe and the rock is the way he observes precedent. Almost forty years earlier, in similar circumstances, God had

told him to take his staff and strike the rock. Now too, God told him to take his staff. Evidently Moshe inferred that he was being told to act this time as he had before, which is what he does. He strikes the rock. What he failed to understand was that time had changed in one essential detail. He was facing a new generation. The people he confronted the first time were those who had spent much of their lives as slaves in Egypt. Those he now faced were born in freedom in the wilderness.

There is one critical difference between slaves and free human beings. Slaves respond to orders. Free people do not. They must be educated, informed, instructed, taught - for if not, they will not learn to take responsibility. Slaves understand that a stick is used for striking. That is how slave-masters compel obedience. Indeed, that was Moshe's first encounter with his people, when he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. But free human beings must not be struck. They respond not to power but persuasion. They need to be spoken to. What Moshe failed to hear - indeed to understand - was that the difference between God's command then and now ("strike the rock" and "speak to the rock") was of the essence. The symbolism in each case was precisely calibrated to the mentalities of two different generations. You strike a slave, but speak to

a free person.

Moshe's inability to hear this distinction was not a failing, still less was it a sin. It was an inescapable consequence of the fact that he was mortal. A figure capable of leading slaves to freedom is not the same as one able to lead free human beings from a nomadic existence in the wilderness to the conquest and settlement of a land. These are different challenges, and they need different types of leadership. Indeed the whole biblical story of how a short journey took forty years teaches us just this truth. Great change does not take place overnight. It takes more than one generation - and therefore more than one type of leader. Moshe could not become a Yehoshua, just as Yehoshua could not be another Moshe. The fact that at a moment of crisis Moshe reverted to an act that had been appropriate forty years before showed that time had come for the leadership to be handed on to a new generation. It is a sign of his greatness that Moshe, too, recognised this fact and took the initiative in asking God (in Bamidbar 27) to appoint a successor.

If this interpretation is correct, then Moshe did not sin, nor was he punished. To be sure, the Torah uses language expressive of sin ("You did not believe in Me", "You rebelled

against Me", "You trespassed against Me", "You did not sanctify Me"). But these phrases may refer, as several commentators suggest (see the tenth interpretation cited by Abarbanel, and the commentary of Lutzatto) not to Moshe and Aharon but to the people, and the incident as a whole. That would explain why Moshe said that "God was angry with me because of you."

The fact that Moshe was not destined to enter the Promised Land was not a punishment but the very condition of his (and our) mortality. It is also clear why this episode occurs in the sedra of Chukat, which begins with the rite of the Red Heifer and purification from contact with death. We also understand why it follows on the death of Miriam, Moshe and Aharon's sister. Law and narrative are here intricately interwoven in a set of variations on the inevitability of death and the continuity of life. For each of us, there is a Jordan we will not cross, however long we live, however far we travel. "It is not for you to complete the task", said Rabbi Tarfon, "but neither are you free to disengage from it." But this is not inherently tragic. What we begin, others will complete - if we have taught them how.

Moshe was a great leader, the greatest of all time. But he was also the supreme teacher. The difference is that his leadership lasted for forty

years, while his teachings have endured for more than three thousand years (that, incidentally, is why we call him Moshe Rabbeinu, "Moshe our teacher", not "Moshe our leader"). This is not to devalue leadership: to the contrary. Had Moshe only taught, not led, the Israelites would not have left Egypt. The message of the rock is not that leadership does not matter: it is that leadership must be of its time. A teacher may live in the world of ancient texts and distant hopes, but a leader must hear the music of the age and address the needs and possibilities of now.

The great leaders are those who, knowledgeable of a people's past and dedicated to its ideal future, are able to bring their contemporaries with them on the long journey from exile to redemption, neither longing for an age that was, nor rushing precipitously into an age that cannot yet be. And, as Moshe understood more deeply than any other human being, the great leaders are also teachers, empowering those who come after them to continue what they have begun.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) Moshe made a human error in judgment. Does that make him less impressive to you?
- (2) Consider other leaders from the stories in the Tanach. Which of

them had moments that made them seem more human? What did that say about their leadership?

- (3) Can you be a truly great leader without also being humble?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Haftara

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The Argument that Persists

CHUKAT

The haftara for Parshat Chukat (Sho-f'tim 11) opens with a scene that feels strikingly familiar. Yiftach, the judge and ad hoc military leader of Gilad, dispatches messengers to reason with the king of Ammon, asking: "What do you have against us [you terrorize us], that you came to attack our land?" (v. 12). The Ammonite reply is direct and bellicose, raising grievances from close to three hundred years before: "Israel seized my lands when they came out of Egypt, from the Arnon to the Yabok and up to the Jordan. Now hand them back peacefully" (v. 13).

The Ammonite's claim centers on the disputed Transjordanian territory of Gilad, the shared backdrop of both

our parsha and our haftara. It also reflects a familiar charge: that Israel holds land that does not rightly belong to us.

In Parshat Chukat, the Israelites navigate past the kingdoms of Edom and Moav, which both refuse entry to the Jewish people. Then the Israelites are forced into confrontation with Sichon, king of the Amorites, after he refuses their request for safe passage through his land and attacks them. Israel defeats Sichon and takes possession of his land – the very land whose ownership lies at the heart of the Ammonite complaint centuries later, in the haftara.

Yiftach's response to that complaint is one of the most precise and legally rigorous arguments in all of Tanach.

He does not bluster or threaten, but marshals the facts. When Israel came out of Egypt, he reminds the Ammonite king, it sought peaceful transit through the region. When passage was refused, Israel went around; it did not seize a single inch of Moabite or Ammonite territory. It took instead the land of the Amorites: territory already conquered by Sichon, who then launched an unprovoked assault on the wandering and weary Israelites.

The conclusion is clear: A nation that attacks another in an attempt to annihilate it forfeits its claims to

protection. Israel did not conquer out of ambition. It defended itself, and the land it now holds is the rightful fruit of that defense. Yiftach's message to Ammon is therefore not a threat; it is a warning. Tend to your own land. Do not press claims that history does not support. Leave us in peace, enjoy your land and let us live in safety in the land that is ours.

The Ammonites, of course, do not listen. War follows, and Israel prevails.

Reading these passages today, their contemporary resonance is hard to ignore. Today, accusations abound: that the Jewish presence in their own land is illegitimate; that the wars Israel has been forced to fight were wars of conquest rather than survival. These arguments are all made today before biased international forums and news media with the same confidence and the same disregard for historical fact that the Ammonite king brought to his confrontation with Yiftach.

There is a consistency across history in the way our enemies engage us. Our obligation, beyond all else, remains to seek the truth, and to ensure the safety of our families and communities.

But as we all know, the haftara does not end with Yiftach's victory. It ends with a tragedy that carries its own lesson, one that speaks not to Israel's

enemies but to Israel itself.

When Yiftach returns home after the battle, he expects what any returning commander might reasonably expect: a grateful people, a jubilant reception, offerings brought in recognition of the victory. It seems to be precisely this expectation that drives him to vow to consecrate as a sacrifice the first thing to emerge from his house upon his return. But when he arrives, there are no crowds. There is only his daughter, coming out alone to meet him. The people, it appears, have never left their homes, and have never paused to acknowledge the man who secured their safety.

The tragedy of Yiftach's daughter is well known and has been much discussed. See my comments:

ots.org.il/parshat-chukat-the-power-of-words-to-break-or-build/

But the tragedy of Yiftach's reception deserves equal attention. A warrior's bravery and sacrifice went unrecognized by those he had protected. A man who had given everything, grown up an outsider, defended his community was once again rejected and neglected.

We dare not make that same mistake. Our soldiers today return from battles no less deserving than Yiftach. They return carrying the physical and emotional weight of

what they have seen and done in our defense. What they require is not symbolic gratitude, but sustained responsibility. Mental health care, financial assistance, recognition, and gratitude are not optional gestures we extend to the heroes of the IDF.

While it is God who protects Israel, He does so through the hands and hearts of these men and women. Our obligation is to ensure that those hands are never left unsupported; that no one who defends our people returns to silence. And that support should not be just for a moment. It should last for as long as it is needed.



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Atonement? Yes!

Rashi on the perek about Para Aduma looks just like Rashi on all of the Torah - selected words and phrases followed by Rashi's comments, explanations, etc.

After his comments on many of the 22 p'sukim of the perek, we find something else. Rashi says that the above commentary is based on the meaning of the words and the halachot related to Para Aduma.

And now I am copying the Midrash Aggada based on Rabi Moshe haDar-

Shan... (He was a contemporary of Rashi, perhaps older than Rashi - both from France.)

Not to go through the whole thing, but here is the general statement:

Para Aduma - This can be compared to the son of a maidservant who soiled the king's palace. They said, "Let his mother come and clean up the mess." Similarly, let the cow come and atone for the calf.

Just as the calf defiled all those who were involved in it, so does the cow render unclean all those involved with it.

And just as they were cleansed through its ashes, as it says, "[he] scattered [the ashes of the burned calf] upon the surface of the water", so [with the cow], "They shall take for that unclean person from the ashes of the burnt purification offering..."

This midrash makes a very strong case for the connection between the Para Aduma and the Eigel HaZahav, and that the Para Aduma is a KAPARA (atonement) for the sin of the golden calf. Very solid multi-point connection.

Except for one 'small' thing.

The Para Aduma Potion (PAP) is used to purify one who became defiled (TAMEI) from contact with a dead body. It is not a sin to be TAMEI. In fact, sometimes it is a great mitzva.

And purification from a state of impurity is not the same as atonement for sin.

So here is an idea to match up Para Aduma and CHEIT (sin).

The body is the receptacle of the person's soul during his lifetime, or the partner of his soul - if you prefer to see it that way. When the soul leaves the body, the body should simply be viewed as having fulfilled its task in the world and should be respectfully discarded by burial, having been created in the image of G-d. But not more than that. Why is the dead body considered AVI AVOT HATUM'A - the greatest source of impurity?

The answer is - SIN. There is a famous mashal (parable) about a king who had a beautiful daughter who fell in love with a common peasant. And he with her. They wanted to be married. Rather than try to break them apart (or maybe failing to break up their romance), the king met with the peasant and warned him that he had better treat his daughter like the princess she was, and not like the wife of a common peasant.

HKBH warns the body - so to speak - that it had better treat the soul in it with the highest degree of spirituality - via a life of Torah and Mitzvot. And that it should not sin, which is a betrayal of the body's charge to treat the soul properly.

It is sin that causes the fact that a dead body is TAMEI. And so, it is the double-function of the Para Aduma Potion, to both purify the defiled AND to (partially) atone for the Sin of the Golden Calf in particular, but for all sin, in general.

Rashi makes a good case for Para Aduma being the Kapara for Cheit HaEigel. The details fit nicely. **PTDT**

לוחסן

מיקרו אולפן
microULPAN

Commonly called KAV NATUI, slanted line, LOCHSAN is its proper name.

In English - slash, forward slash, stroke, solidus, virgule, oblique, diagonal, slant, whack

Here are some uses:

3/4, he/she, 12/8/1926

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



CHUKAT

A New Day

I still remember JFK's inaugural address (after all, it was only 66 years ago). It was very moving when he declared, 'Let the word go forth from

this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans -- born in this century...' My generation, the Babyboomers, are definitely not ready to pass the 'torch', but that's another issue.

Our Torah reading, in a more subtle way, makes the same announcement: In the first month of the year, the whole community of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Tzin and camped at Kadesh (Bamidbar 20:1). That was the beginning of the last year in the Wilderness. The entire previous generation has passed (except Moshe, Miriam, Aharon, Kalev and Yehoshua). During this period the torch is, indeed, passed.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch notes a major change in the mind set of the Jewish nation. Throughout the 39 years of the sojourn, whenever the nation stopped the verb which appears is VAYICHAN ('they encamped'), but here in the Wilderness of Tzin, the verb suddenly is VAYEISHEV. This term translates as 'and they settled'. Finally, the Jews have a sense of belonging and stability. This is a major change in mind set.

The verse ends with the information that Miriam passes away SHAM ('there'). The K'dushat Levi explains that whenever the term SHAM appears connected to a death it

implies that the person died by means of a kiss from God.

If there is something special about someone dying SHAM, then Miriam is doubly blessed. The verse ends with V'TIKAVEIR SHAM ('and she was buried there'). Rav Hirsch suggests that the second SHAM implies that: Her mission on earth had been completed. Her grave in Kadesh could tell future generations that she did not die until the new generation stood ready to enter the promised future.

This observation inspires Rav Hirsch to further note that 'During the long journey, so rich in painful experiences and repeated rebellions against God, it was the women who participated least in those acts of despair.'

Even though this position is very unorthodox, Rav Hirsch doubles down on the merit of the women and, based on a Midrash, explains: Thus entering the Promised Land went grandmothers and mothers who carried with them the living memory of Egypt and the wilderness. They transmitted the spirit of those God-filled experiences to their children and grandchildren. Much of this earlier spiritual formation of the women must surely be attributed to Miriam, who went before them as a prophetess.

On the other hand, many commentaries explain the placement of the

laws of the PARA ADUMA (red heifer) which immediately precedes this verse, as very significant. There are those authorities who look back on the years in the Wilderness, when so many died, and see the PARA ADUMA passages as closure for those difficult years and experiences.

Others see the PARA ADUMA passage as the introduction to the stories of the deaths of Miriam and, soon, Aharon. The Talmud declares: "Why is the death of Miriam placed next to the section of the Red Heifer? To teach you that just as the Red Heifer brings atonement, so too the death of the righteous brings atonement.' (Mo'ed Katan 28a)

Then, Rav Hirsch adds: For truly, one must be blind if the death of a righteous one does not become the most powerful sermon on immortality... That chapter serves as an introduction to these deaths and proclaims: What made Miriam truly Miriam, and Aharon truly Aharon, did not die with their deaths. Just as their influence lives on in future generations, so their essential being has returned to God, and entered eternity.

The very next verse records that the well, which had travelled miraculously with B'nei Yisrael throughout the journey, dried up. The Torah states, succinctly: The EIDA (community, congregation) had no water! This

statement inspires the Midrash to relate: God dispatched Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam, as it is stated: I sent before you Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam (Micha 6:4), and it was due to their merit that they were sustained. The manna was due to the merit of Moshe... The clouds of glory were due to the merit of Aharon... The well was due to the merit of Miriam. When Miriam died there and was buried there - what is written thereafter? There was no water for the congregation (Bamidbar Rabba 1:2).

The death of Miriam brought the end of the Well and the beginning of the difficult episode which challenged the authority of Moshe and Aharon, called Mei Meriva ('The Waters of Strife'). Traditionally, our sources claim that their failure in this incident caused their banishment from Eretz Yisrael.

But Rav Sacks asks a more basic question: Why did Moshe fail this particular test?

In Rav Sacks's analysis of this story, we see a direct narrative line from the death of Miriam, the departure of the Well and the failure of Moshe. He explains that he is presenting the natural and psychological reading of the text. Miriam had been the guide and companion for Moshe from his birth and during his float on the Nile. Rav Sacks explains: It is only here that we get a full sense of her

influence. For the first time Moshe faces a challenge without her, and for the first time Moshe loses control before the people.

Rav Sacks then explains: A leader needs 3 kinds of support:

1. Allies who will fight alongside him;
2. A team to whom to delegate; and
3. A soulmate to whom he can confide his doubts and fears, and listen without an agenda, other than being a supportive presence.

He then concludes: Even the greatest cannot lead alone. Even Moshe needed a human friend, and it seems that this was Miriam.

The more we think about the death of Miriam, the more we realize how truly significant that event was. A 'New Day' is often a necessary day, but not always a 'Happy Day!' 🙏

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -
www.ravkooktorah.com

Speak to the Rock

Summary: We yearn for a world where our inner truth, the Divine light of the universe, is expressed, not through force and coercion, but through words and dialogue.

What is the meaning of God's

instruction to Moshe to speak to the rock? Can rocks hear us?

The short answer is – yes! Nature and all of its laws are listening. They listen for the call of redemption. They yearn for the redemptive light that preceded the creation of the universe. When this unifying light is revealed, the world's divided factions become linked and bound to their underlying foundation.

“Those who rule over themselves and cleave to their Creator, utilizing the world only to aid them in serving the Creator – they uplift themselves and the universe with them.... It is like the statement of the Sages, that the rocks united together [to form a bed for Yaakov], each one saying: Let the tzaddik rest his head on me.” (Mesilat Yesharim, ch. 1)

As Moshe approached to speak to the rock, all of creation was listening. Tragically, instead of speaking, Moshe hit the rock. The waters, meant to revive and nourish the people, instead became Mei Meriva – “Waters of Dispute”, bringing conflict and discord into the world. With his impatience and anger, Moshe introduced a framework of coercion and force into the world, thus debasing the universe. The world was no longer ready to listen in attentive quietude to the inner voice of the Infinite.

The paradigm shifted from speaking to striking, from receptive listening

to coercive force.

A World That Listens

This tragic discord will be healed through the Divine spirit that flows within the wisdom of Israel. The flowing waters of Israel's wellspring – the Torah – will heal the discord of Mei Meriva. Every Jewish soul has a part in revealing this wisdom. It will arise powerfully, enabling the living word of God to penetrate all hearts. The return to patient communication will awaken the world's latent state of listening in all its splendor.

You have opened my ears... Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come, with a scroll of a book written for me.’ (T'hilim 40:7-8)

We yearn for a world that listens with open ears, ears that are able to hear the inner call. We aspire for a world where our inner truth, the light of the Life of the worlds, is expressed, not through force and coercion, but through words and literature. “Behold, I have come, with a scroll of a book written for me.”

The Tikunei Zohar identifies the staff which Moshe used to redeem the Jewish people as a pen. “The staff of God’ – that is the pen.” Moshe's staff, used to strike the rock, will be transformed into a tool of communication and dialogue. And the art of literature will flourish, redeemed from its waywardness.

*Sapphire from the Land of Israel.
Adapted from Shemonah Kevatzim,
book VII, section 28*

Rav Kook on T'hilim

*from an unpublished work
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison*

T'hilim 24 - Opening the Temple Gates

Summary: Shlomo's difficulty placing the Ark inside the Temple was a sign that the Jewish nation was not ready for the Temple and its spiritual influence.

In this chapter, the psalmist pleads with the gates to open up:

S'U SH'ARIM RASHEICHEM... Lift up your heads, O gates; and let the entrances of the world be uplifted, so the King of glory may enter. Who is this King of glory? God, strong and mighty; God, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, gates; lift up, entrances of the world, so the King of glory may enter. Who is He, this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory. (T'hilim 24:7-10)

What exactly are these gates that refuse to open? Why does the psalm describe God first as a mighty Warrior in battle and later as the Lord of Hosts?

The Talmud writes that these were the prayers of Shlomo HaMelech as he pleaded with the Temple gates. After completing the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the final step was to bring the Holy Ark into the Holy of Holies. But the gates refused to open!

Why did the Temple gates disobey Shlomo?

Disconnect between Mind and Heart

According to Rav Kook, Shlomo's difficulty placing the Ark inside the Temple was a sign that the Jewish nation was not ready for the Temple and its spiritual influence on the entire world.

Divine service is based on those human faculties through which the human soul receives the Divine light. The Temple service – like prayer – primarily engages our faculties of emotions and imagination.

But these faculties must be governed by the intellect. Thus, completing the Temple meant placing the Ark – which contained the Luchot and the Torah scroll, the source of enlightenment for the world – in the innermost chamber.

Those who have not refined their character traits suffer from a dissonance between their intellectual recognition and their desires. While

they know the correct path, their hearts and desires are not under the intellect's control. This disparity, if not corrected, will eventually lead to a spiritual lapse of great magnitude.

This phenomenon of dissonance can also exist on the national level. The people in the time of Shlomo were not on a sufficiently high spiritual and moral level. Their spiritual attainments were temporary. In the depths of their souls, the seeds of corruption that would later bring about the Temple's destruction were already planted.

The Temple gates' refusal to accept the Ark is a metaphor for this lack of spiritual readiness. The people's inner emotions were not pure, and they had failed to fully establish their intellectual level. They had not clarified the path that could guide their hearts and desires.

Shlomo HaMelech's Solution

When Shlomo sought to bring the Ark and the Temple together, he was searching for a method to unite the minds and hearts of the nation.

Generally speaking, the intellect seeks to benefit all peoples, without differentiating between nationalities. It is the heart that feels an attachment to one's people and seeks to promote its success in particular.

With regard to the Jewish people, however, there is no conflict between

these two aspirations. Respect accorded to the Jewish people leads to universal recognition of monotheism and the ideals of the Torah; the entire world benefits from this enlightenment.

Shlomo turned to the Temple gates, guarding over the national interests of the Jewish people: "Lift up your heads!" Open up, and let God enter!

When the gates of Jerusalem open up, the "entrances of the entire world" will also open. The heart, full of love and concern for the Jewish people, will then complement the intellect, which aspires to elevate the entire world.

Two Paths to Elevate the Nations

The Temple is a source of universal enlightenment, a "house of prayer for all the nations" (Yishayahu 56:7). There are two paths in which Israel can influence the world; Shlomo HaMelech alluded to both in his prayer.

At a time when there are many forces in the world opposing the Jewish people and the Torah, we can nonetheless identify an overall progress towards the ultimate goal. One factor in this advance is recognition of God's protection of His people over the millennia. The unique story of a people surviving (and outlasting) many powerful empires who sought to subjugate and destroy it demon-

strates formidable Divine providence in the history of the world.

Not only did Israel survive, but often vanquished other nations, enabling other nations to recognize the nobility of its Torah and holy ideals. The survival of the Jewish people throughout centuries of persecution reflects the Divine attribute of G'VURA, strength and might. Shlomo referred to this aspect when he described God as "mighty in battle".

There exists a second, gentler method by which Israel influences the world. Not in the loud blaring of battle, but in the "still, small voice". Gradually, without fanfare, holiness spreads from the enlightened source of Israel. The "entrances of the world" are not forcibly opened by the gates of Jerusalem. They lift themselves up: "Let the entrances of the world be uplifted."

Each nation will rise to the higher goal, but its truth will correspond to its own predisposition. The ethical hues will be numerous and varied, as each nation accepts the imprint of Godly ideals based on its natural tendencies.

In this second path, God is revealed as "the Lord of Hosts", the God of many diverse peoples. Each nation strives towards its own particular goal, and together they unite towards the one universal goal, in accordance

with their Creator's will.

*Adapted from Ein Eyah
vol. III, pp. 83-85, on Shabbat 30*

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

The Lubavitcher Rebbe reminds us of our roots

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

The third of Tammuz marks 32 years since the passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The following interaction beautifully illustrates the worldview of the leader of the Chabad movement:

George Rohr, a philanthropist who built more than 150 Chabad Houses on college campuses, once came to the Rebbe and said he had organized a minyan for those "who had no Jewish background".

The Rebbe firmly replied: "Go back and tell them that they have a Jewish background. There is no such thing as a Jew without a background. Every Jew has a magnificent heritage – Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah."

This encounter captures the Rebbe's message to each and every one of us: There is no Jew who is truly "far away" or "disconnected". We simply need to become aware of our roots

and not be distracted by the “background noise” around us, even as we help others reconnect with their roots as well.

Each of us possesses a remarkable Jewish heritage, with patriarchs and matriarchs whose pride in us soars when we live by the values they entrusted to us.

Send your friends this link so that they can receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's content too: tiny.cc/DailyPortion



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

CHUKAT

Seeing the serpent

When the Israelites grumbled, they were bitten by serpents (Bamidbar 21).

What happened next? God told Moshe to make a copper serpent and place it on a pole. If anybody was bitten by a serpent, they were to look at the copper serpent and then they would live.

Rashi questions this notion and suggests that if someone suffered they should turn their gaze upward to God and subdue their hearts to their Father in heaven, and this would cure

them.

It seems clear that if anyone had sinned the result would be suffering, and only if they appealed to God would they be forgiven and purified.

However, this leaves unanswered the question of the purpose of the copper serpent. Ramban thinks the idea is psychological: if one were suffering, the healing would come from the cause of the suffering. “Healing”, said Ramban, “is effected by the very cause of the suffering itself.”

Maybe the lesson is that suffering comes from looking away from God, and recovery comes from restoring one’s trust in the Divine power.

The secret weapon

A verse in the Torah reading says, “Thus is it written in the Books of the Wars of the Lord” (Bamidbar 21:14).

The Book of the Wars of the Lord is one of those books that are mentioned in the Scriptures but have never been found.

It is understood allegorically by Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin, who used to say, “The nations of the world have military records which list their troops and their triumphs but what we Jews have is the notion that when God has a war to fight, His weapon is a book.

“The book with which God wages war

against evil is the Torah which describes the Almighty's purposes for the world and the principles of justice, peace and truth which specify the ideals which He intends will become the tenets of the Divine Utopia." -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

CHUKAT

G-d said to Moshe: "Take the stick, assemble the congregation... and speak to the rock... You will bring water out from the rock and supply the people and their cattle" (20:7-8).

But Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it. Higher Authority then informed him that he would not bring the Israelites into the Promised Land.

The M'forashim offer many explanations of Moshe's error and G-d's response, which broadly divide into two groups. The first category focuses on Moshe's actually striking the rock instead of speaking to it. The second category considers issues in the general background of Moshe's relationship with Israel, which his striking the rock brought to a head.

The Kitvei Ramad Vali (R. Moshe David Vali, student of the Ramchal)

explores an additional dimension to the story. Like Rashi, he links the shortage of water to Miriam's death, which had only just taken place. Rashi brings the tradition that it was in Miriam's merit that they had a constant and miraculous water supply in the previous 40 years, wherever they were. Yet, explains the Alshich, the people did not mourn her when she died, as they were later to do for Aharon and Moshe. Life carried on whether she was alive or not. As a consequence, the water stopped, as people had been taking her merits for granted. The people became highly provocative: Moshe and Aharon had no recourse, but to go consult with G-d at once in the Ohel Mo'ed, the part of the Mishkan where the Shechina was most intense, and ask for emergency guidance. The Ohr HaChayim observes that G-d shows understanding to those with genuine concerns even if they express themselves without dignity and decorum.

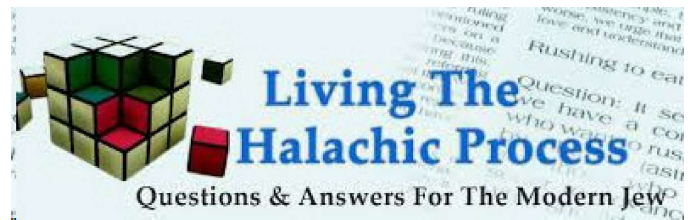
Thus, G-d then told Moshe and Aharon to speak to the Rock. The Ramad's approach links remembering Miriam's merits with G-d commanding Moshe and Aharon to speak to the rock. As Rashi explains elsewhere (Sh'mot 19:3), communicating a particular directive to women involves a degree of delicacy, getting it across with a minimum of effort and in a way that will arouse their sympathetic response. In contrast, men are more

likely to get the same point when it is made firmly, emphatically, and explicitly.

For this reason, G-d did not direct Moshe and Aharon to strike the rock as Moshe had previously (Sh'mot 17:5), but instead to speak to the rock. That register was uncharacteristically feminine. It was also designed to arouse the more feminine spiritual stream: Chesed, kindness. It would thus illustrate to the assembled Israelites that it was in the merit of the quickly-forgotten Miriam that the Chesed of a regular supply of water would now continue. It was that lack of recognition that caused the supply to cease, and Moshe's demonstrating the feminine side would enable Miriam's merits to be recognized, and the water would be duly restored.

But, explains the Ramad (similarly to the Rambam in Sh'moneh P'rakim), Moshe's annoyance: "Listen now, you rebels!" meant that the lesson would not be learnt. Out of anger, he struck the rock rather than spoke to the rock as he was told.

It was a missed educational opportunity to teach the much-needed lesson of not taking people and things for granted... 🌿📖



Reprinted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Is it Preferable to Start a Meal with Bread?

Question: It seems wrong that some people decide not to do netilat yadayim¹ and eat bread at the beginning of a meal, and thus do not bentch (recite Birkat HaMazon). One who has a meal should bentch, and if it takes eating a little bread, so be it. However, someone told me that if you eat only a little piece of bread, you have to recite individual berachot throughout the meal. Is that so?

Answer: One is not required to eat bread if he does not want to, even if it means that he will not bentch (except on Shabbat and Yom Tov, when eating a meal including bread is required²). That being said, regularly avoiding eating bread because one does not want to be bothered with bentching is a regrettable phenomenon.

¹ A special manner of washing one's hands, in this case, before eating bread.

² Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 274:4; ibid. 529:1.

A person who has the philosophy that you espouse and makes the effort to wash and bentsch at every meal should be careful not to cause more halachic problems than it is worth. The first possible issue involves netilat yadayim. Although it is proper to be stringent and wash before eating any amount of bread,³ the obligation likely begins only when eating a k'zayit,⁴ and possibly even a k'beitza.^{5 6} Therefore, one should not make a b'racha on netilat yadayim before eating less than a k'beitza.⁷ (The question of how to calculate these sizes is hotly contested and beyond our present scope).

Eating a small amount of bread with the intention that everything else that one eats will be “covered” by the meal’s b'rachot (HaMotzi and Birkat HaMazon) raises another problem. While the gemara⁸ says that bread exempts from a b'racha other foods that are eaten subsequently during the meal, this is true only under circumstances in which the foods are subsumed in the meal.⁹ Based on this, the Magen Avraham¹⁰ suggests that if one eats a tiny piece of bread, or even

a larger amount but for the sole purpose of exempting other foods, the other foods do not revolve around the bread and the HaMotzi may not exempt them from their b'rachot. He counters that it is possible that since bread is usually the anchor of the meal, the principle that the b'racha on it exempts other foods applies across the board.

According to the more accepted understanding of the Magen Avraham’s opinion,¹¹ one should not set up a situation in which he is eating bread just to exempt other b'rachot, due to the doubt regarding whether this works. The same logic applies, despite one’s good intentions, when one eats bread just so that he will be obligated to bentsch. Admittedly, some prominent authorities say that other foods are exempted even in that case.¹² However, this is hardly an optimal situation that we would suggest for one who would prefer not to eat bread at all. If one likes to eat bread for its own sake but abstains in order not to “be bothered” with washing and bentsching,¹³ it would be fine to convince him to regularly include bread in his meal, and the

³ See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 158:3, and *Mishna Berura* ad loc. 10.

⁴ The size of an olive.

⁵ The size of an egg.

⁶ *Shulchan Aruch* op. cit. 2.

⁷ *Mishna Berura* ad loc. 9.

⁸ *Berachot* 41b.

⁹ See some applications, ad loc.

¹⁰ 177:1.

¹¹ See *Machatzit HaShekel* ad loc.; *Mishna Berura* 177:3.

¹² *Even HaOzer* 174:12; *Aruch HaShulchan* 177:2; *Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim* IV, 41.

¹³ The same is likely true of one who enjoys bread but would prefer to avoid it due to dietary concerns.

Magen Avraham's issue would not apply.¹⁴

If one eats less than a k'zayit of bread, then although he still recites HaMotzi, even more poskim agree that he must make all the individual b'rachot during the meal.¹⁵ Furthermore, he will not be able to bentch in any case and will have to make the appropriate b'rachot after eating. If he does have a k'zayit, he must eat it within the timeframe of k'dei achilat pras.^{16 17}

We have not weighed all the pros and cons (including the issue of eating bread-like foods during a full meal without bread¹⁸), and we have not arrived at a recommended course of action for every permutation. However, we can fairly say that if a person is not interested in eating approximately a slice of bread, he should feel free to pass it up together with washing and bentching. Whichever approach one takes, he should become familiar with the several halachic questions that arise in "bread meals" and "non-bread meals."

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

CHUKAT

For a second time we find Moshe Rabbeinu striking a desert boulder with his staff. The incident and its consequences as related in this week's Parsha leaves us with a gnawing question. What did G-d want Moshe to say when speaking to the rock?

Moshe, this time, was simply being told to lift his hands in prayerful supplication and talk from the depths of his heart; a process he knew so well. Pray for water. Start, the way he always would do, with praise (Shevach)... and then ask for water (Bakasha). Perhaps, also invoke the merit of the forefathers. Ask for water in the merit of His children who crossed the Yam Suf following you, Moshe, so faithfully, believing that G-d is protecting them. What a perfect moment it would have been, hearing Moshe recite the first version of T'filat Geshem.

Rabbi Chaim Wasserman zt"l felt that this would have been a precious

¹⁴. See *V'Zot HaBeracha*, p. 71.

¹⁵. *Igrot Moshe* op. cit. In this case, regarding several *halachot*, it is not even considered eating, and there is also no obligation of *Birkat HaMazon* to unite the food into the framework of a meal. See also *Chelkat Ya'akov, Orach Chayim* 49.

¹⁶. The duration of this timeframe is also contested, but is roughly in the range of 4-9 minutes.

¹⁷. *Mishna Berura* 210:1.

¹⁸. See *Igrot Moshe* op. cit.

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

CHUKAT 5785

(A bit longer than the usual chizuk, I hope you stay with it to its conclusion. Thanks.)

The Jewish people are in their 40th year, on the threshold of entering their Promised Land, and we read, with surprising disappointment, how they quickly lapse into complaining when faced with discomfort and uncertainty. True, in the wake of Miriam's death, the miraculous well that had provided Israel with water vanished. Their appeal to Moshe for water was understandable. However, why does the Torah state that they actually quarreled with Moshe about it, bellyaching and accusing Moshe of having brought them out of Egypt to a place of no water (20:3-5). Wasn't this the carping refrain of their parents, some 40 years earlier? At least then, one could excuse a people who had just emerged from bondage with little to prepare them for the harsh desert conditions. But their children? Hadn't they learned anything over the past four decades in the wilderness?

And not long after this event, following the death of Aharon, the people once again begin grumbling; this time about the manna, that miraculous food that sustained them

moment for Moshe to, yet again, publicly reinforce the efficacy of prayer for this generation and all generations to follow. Moshe was the one who had prayed so fervently on behalf of the Israelites when G-d wanted to destroy them all for having made the golden calf. Moshe had begged for the well-being of his sister Miriam when she besmirched your good name and G-d smote her with a debilitating leprosy. With five simple words Moshe beseeched G-d to heal Miriam. And Moshe will soon stand and endlessly pray in every which way for a chance to enter the Promised Land.

Perhaps, now it was the time for Moshe to pray. In this way G-d's name would have been sanctified in the eyes of this entire generation more than in any other way. Tragically, such an opportunity was missed. Instead, Moshe struck the rock as he had done once before. The Israelites needed a lesson in prayer, and instead, they saw a slight of hand. It is trying days that we, the Jewish people, face today in the Land of Israel. We should look at the hidden message from the Parsha of how crucial and important Prayer could be to help extricate us from the difficult situation we find ourselves in. 🙏

in the desert for 40 years. Again, they blame Moshe for taking them out of Egypt "to die in this wilderness; for there is no food and no water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread [the manna]" (21:5). True, they are not demanding a return to Egypt, but how are we to explain their awful and appalling ingratitude? Their water had been restored and they still had plenty of food - the manna and the quail! Why the crabby discontent?

To understand the mood of the people at this juncture, let us make a number of observations. As mentioned, the people were keenly aware that they stood in their 40th year since leaving Egypt. They were now the new generation who would enter the Land, and with that realization, they knew the time had come to transition from a desert-miraculous existence to a natural one. This transition, however, would be fraught with two tension-filled realities. The first, that although no doubt hardened by their desert-life condition, the people had not been tested in battle. As such, they may have reasonably harbored some doubt about their ability to defeat a land of many nations. And second, with the death of their leaders, the people would certainly be concerned about who would intervene for them with HaShem, ensuring that Gd would continue to provide and protect them in their conquest of the Land. With

this backdrop, we begin our explanation. The analysis will, in part, rest upon the original insights of the Netziv in his Ha'amek Davar who contextualizes these events in terms of the transition that needed to take place.

Chazal explain that the people were traumatized by the deaths of Miriam and Aharon. Even Moshe, in deep grief for his sister, required HaShem's exhortation to cease his mourning and attend to the needs of the people. According to the Netziv what was needed was a leadership that could slowly wean the people away from an existence which relied totally upon the visibly miraculous. In other words, a process of transition would be indispensable and pivotal for success in their eventual settling of the Land. Here were a people poised to enter and conquer the Land, but in Canaan, their victory would no longer be handed to them on the "silver platter" of the supernatural. In the desert, they were coddled - almost spoon-fed, protected and sustained by Gd and led by three great spiritual and moral giants who instilled within them confidence and safety, trust and refuge. When the water suddenly disappeared, the people were naturally deeply troubled. "How will we survive; how can we successfully vanquish the nations of Canaan?" The image of Egypt was immediately

recalled - a place of shelter and security, predictable and comforting - home. And they parroted their parents' complaint by clinging to the old patterns of a previous generation. They doubted their own strengths and worth, and anxiously wondered whether they could handle the unknowns of freedom without a Miriam, without an Aharon. In a word, could they make this critical transition to a real-life mode of living?

When, after the burial of Aharon and the brief battle with Amalek, the people were commanded by HaShem to make an about-face and turn back into the desert and detour around the territory of Edom, the Torah states that people became disheartened (21:4). More, they were frustrated and disgruntled. As Rashi comments: "We were so close to entering the Land, but [now] we turn to our rear!" Their complaining about the manna immediately followed (21:5).

It should be rather clear, as the Netziv contends, that the people's carping about the water and manna was indicative of their difficulty in making this transition from desert to country. On the one hand, they were genuinely excited about finally leaving a barren wasteland for their "Land flowing with milk and honey", but their impatience to get there could not deal with the reality that there was still some additional business to take care of before the

conquest. And yet, on the other hand, they were anxious and apprehensive about transitioning from their metaphysical existence to one of normalcy, of nation-building by dint of their own efforts. This tension exploded with their grumblings and quarreling. "We're tired of the manna sameness; let's get to Israel where we can eat a full cuisine of culinary delights, but where will we get the food and water once we invade?"

In the Mei Meriva (water from the rock) episode, the Netziv argues that Moshe and Aharon failed to teach the people that HaShem would no longer provide water via a miracle. Rather now, it would be prayer - "Speak to the rock" (20:8) - which would accomplish the same. Transitioning to this change in order to elicit HaShem's blessings would be essential for the people's survival in the Land. In failing to do so, Moshe revealed that his leadership was wanting. He would no longer be permitted to enter and lead the people in their new Land.

When later, the people complain a second time about the manna, HaShem devises a different strategy to both address their ingratitude and to help them in making the necessary transition that the Netziv says was both vital and imperative. First, the lack of HAKARAT HATOV. If after 40 years, under the protective canopy of

the Almighty and under tutelage of their three great leaders, they still were of little faith and failed miserably to evince any gratitude to HaShem for His constant providential care, they certainly deserved a harsh lesson. And so, they were quickly abandoned on the desert floor, left exposed to its dangers, and eventually poisoned by the bite of snakes. And this to remind them of HaShem's providential care which they had taken for granted.

But what was it about the snakes per se as a means of punishment; why not some other predatory animal, a different penalty? And how would the curative power of the copper serpent teach and contribute to their ability to transition? The snake, of course, instantly summoned up the primeval serpent of the Garden of Eden. In rabbinic literature, the nachash (snake) was the first manifestation of the yetzer hara. From the very outset, the mission of this "evil inclination" was to lure man away from his divine assignment, to trip him up with all sorts of enticements and/or anxieties. Chazal tell us that there are certain situations in which the yetzer hara "dances" and thrives, and which therefore require Divine assistance to counter. And journeying is one of them.

The people of Israel were on a journey for 40 years. The journey now would

have to change to a different type of march. A major transition was in order. And because all transitions, by definition are periods of flux and instability, the yetzer hara has a "field-day", and takes full advantage of a person's feelings of vulnerability and insecurity during this worrisome "no-man's-land" of transformation and adjustment. Indeed, the pressing need to abandon one's comfort zone and transition is never a simple or tranquil accommodation. And so, the "snake" begins to assault the people with fear and uncertainty, mistrust and ingratitude - anything to thwart their forward movement and derail their journey toward their promised destination. How to battle against this snake-yetzer hara? The remedy for this - as with any yetzer hara for that matter - was to externalize it. When allowed to churn and metastasize from within a person's psyche, this insidious snake can wreak havoc by messing with a person's authentic sense of self, blinding a people to their true identity, convincing a person that he/she is not the person he/she was meant to be. The result: sin, and the eventual unravelling of a person's well-being across every level of his existence, ultimately leading to his complete disintegration. There is no escape. But when the snake-yetzer hara is "placed on a staff" (21:8) and seen from the outside, then with Gd's help, it is seen for what it is

and can be dealt with, fought against, and successfully neutralized.

When the snakes attacked, the people were told to gaze upon the "copper snake", symbolic of the yetzer hara. The message would be powerful and unmistakable: "This yetzer hara, masking as your fears and uncertainties, is not you! It is outside, not part of your pure interior, your soul. But alone, you will not succeed in banishing that snake and its poison from within you. You will need the help of your 'Father in Heaven'! Look to the copper snake and then beyond to HaShem and you can be healed from the deadly bite of the snake-yetzer hara." In the words of the Mishna: "Did the serpent kill, or did the serpent preserve life? Rather, when the Jewish people turned their eyes upward and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they were healed."

Fortunately for the people of Israel, in their 40th year, both HaShem and Moshe eventually ensured that they would succeed in transitioning from a desert-overt miracle existence to one of a natural hidden miracle normality. But, for us, there would be important lessons to be learned from this experience. First, patience is a virtue. Often, matters do not play out as quickly or in the manner we had hoped or planned for. Waiting and waiting even more becomes neces-

sary and critical. Second, we must never fail to express our appreciation for all that has transpired - to HaShem and to the many people who help bring us to whatever destination we so eagerly seek, who are there to teach us how to fulfill our unique mission in life. And while there's surely nothing wrong with raising legitimate concerns and worries along the way, these issues must always be expressed in such a way so as to reflect the twin moralities of patience and gratitude.

But probably, the most important take-a-way from this Biblical narrative is first, the quotidian and inevitable reality of transition, a basic constituent of every life. And then second, how we must learn to successfully navigate the many challenges of transition and emerge the better for it. In life, we must all progress from child to teen to adult, from couple to parent, from work to retirement, from physical wellbeing to physical limitation, and the list goes on. Each advance has its unique set of yetzer haras that test us and attempt to arrest our uphill push to complete the transition event and grow. But, with HaShem's help, we can always traverse the transition-divide. We can overcome the obstacles, sideline the "snakes", and emerge on the other side of the transition experience, better for the effort and struggle, and greater than we were before! 🙌



You inhabitants of the earth.

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 1532. Our statement to the scoffers - ZOT CHUKAT HATORAH...

USFUNEI T'MUNEI CHOL is the title of my book of Gimatriya Matches - IY"H and BE"H. The title translates to Hidden in the Sand. That's how I feel about my Gimatriya searches. Like walking along the beach with a metal detector. Beep-beep-beep. Lean down and find something. Usually, nothing of note. But sometimes you find something special.

CHUKAT

GM This week's sedra's name comes from the phrase ZOT CHUKAT HATORAH, in Bamidbar 19:2 -

זאת חוקת התורה...

the following is declared to be the Torah's decree

The gimatriya of this Neat Partial Pasuk (NPP) is 1532. Store that fact for later.

On this phrase, Rashi quotes the Midrash Tanchuma as saying:

Because the Satan and the nations of the world (and, sadly, many Jews, as well) scoff at Israel saying, What is this mitzva and what reason does it have, therefore it (Para Aduma, in this case) is called a CHOK, (and we say) it is a decree (from God) to me, and we do not question it.

Now take a look at T'hilim 49:2 -

שמעו נא כל העמים
האזינו כל ישיבי וזכר:

Hear this, all you peoples; hearken, all

RED ALERT!

CHUKAT

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- The opening chapter gives us the perplexing law of the Red Cow. This law is the epitome of the Hebrew term Chok, an incompressible Torah law. My wife and I once spent a Shabbat in Rechovot, Israel, and we ate dinner Friday night at the house of HaRav Simcha HaKohen Kook z"l, the chief rabbi of the city. HaRav Kook passed away in 2022 at the age of 92; he was a great nephew of HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, chief rabbi of Israel, died 1935. After dinner that Friday night, HaRav Kook stated that every Torah law has to be understood as a Chok. You have to keep studying that law until you

will reach something incomprehensible, making us realize that every law is from Hashem. His example was the law of Do Not Kill. It seems very comprehensible. Until you reach the following. A suspected murderer is judged by a court of 23 judges. If the judges vote 22 to 1 to find him guilty, they execute him. But if they vote 23 to 0 guilty, they may not execute him. Seemingly illogical, but the vote would indicate that no one argued for his defense.

- Having a law like a Red Cow will bring about many questions from religious doubters, like “What kind of law is this? What reason is there for this?” To this the Dubnov Maggid (Rav Yaakov Krantz, 1741-1804, great preacher and master of parables) told a story. An ignorant Jewish businessman struck it rich and succeeded to marry off his son to the daughter of the chief rabbi of the city. After the wedding this rich man noticed that the rabbi was deliberately distancing himself from his Mechutan. When the wealthy man asked the rabbi about this, the rabbi responded that there is nothing to talk about. The application of the story is that after Hashem gave us the Torah, we would expect some explanation for all these Halachot, but such is not the case. We only accept these laws, and admire and be satisfied that Hashem has chosen us above all other nations of the world.

- The expression “this is the Chok of the Torah” appears twice in the Torah. Once is here with the mitzva of the Red Cow. The second place is in Parshat Matot when the Torah describes the method of kashering the utensils that Bnei Yisrael took in the war with the Midianites. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888, Germany) wrote that both these laws, one here dealing with the purity of the body, and there, dealing with the kashrut of your home, serve as the introduction and the necessary conditions of all 613 Torah Mitzvot. This definitely fits well with what Rav Kook stated in the first Dvar Torah above. The bottom line is back to what Rashi wrote: Don’t think about it. It will only confuse us. Be comfortable where and what we are in Hashem’s world.

- Miriam dies in the beginning of chapter 20. (Between chapters 19 and 20, there is a gap of some 38 quiet years. Nothing happened during that time except the slow dying out of the generation of male adults that left Egypt, with the exception of the women and members of the tribe of Levi.) Now in the fortieth year of travel, Miriam, Aharon, and Moshe will die. Miriam dies on the 10th of Nissan. Aharon will die on the first of Av. And Moshe will die on the 7th of Adar. In the span of 11 months, the top 3 religious leaders will expire,

preparing the nation for the new reality to accompany the people into Canaan. Miriam and Aharon die in this Parsha. The Kli Yakar (Rav Shlomo Efrayim of Luntzitz, 1550-1619, Poland and Prague) notes that there was no crying or eulogies associated with Miriam's passing. Hence the people suffered from thirst immediately after her departure.

- The Abravanel weighs in on the reasons that Moshe and Aharon are decreed to die in this Parsha. According to him (Rav Yitzchak Abravanel, 1437-1508, Portugal, Spain, and Italy), neither Moshe nor Aharon died because of the hitting of the rock. Aharon's sin was his involvement with the construction of the Golden Calf. Moshe's sin was his approval of the spy mission to Canaan. The reason that Hashem did not decree their real punishment for their sins was to allow the entire nation that left Egypt to die out naturally over the course of some 40 years. Now with their departure, Hashem will lead these two most righteous men to their departure as well. (The subject of Miriam's death is not discussed by anyone. Maybe it was just her time to leave.)

- According to the straight forward reading of the text, Moshe and Aharon do not enter the Promised Land due to the sin of hitting the rock, rather than speaking to it, as

HaShem instructed them to do. Our commentators over the course of years all ask the same questions. Moshe hit the rock, not Aharon. What did Aharon do to warrant his dying in the desert? According to most, the answer is quite textual. The Torah records that Moshe hit the rock twice. Had he hit the rock just once, Aharon would have not been guilty of any wrong doing. He could have been surprised. But after Moshe hit the rock once, Aharon could have and should have said something to stop his brother from hitting the rock a second time. The fact that Aharon said and did nothing indicated that he was in agreement with Moshe's actions. Hence Aharon did deserve a similar punishment.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. What is the main purpose of the Red Cow? (19:17-18)
2. Where did Miriam die and in what year after the Exodus? (20:1)
3. On what calendar date did Aharon die? (33:38)
4. How did Hashem stop the deaths caused by fiery snakes? (21:8-9)
5. What were the names of the two mighty kings that Moshe and Bnei Yisrael killed while traveling? (21:21 and 33)

From Rashi

6. What is the real lesson in referring to the law of the Red Cow as a Chok, a decree? (19:2)
7. Hashem sent a Mal'ach, a messenger, to take the Jews out of Egypt. Who was that Mal'ach? (20:16)
8. When Moshe was trying to convince the Edomites to allow Bnei Yisrael to go through their country to get to the Promised Land, he told them that Bnei Yisrael would buy water from the Edomites. Why? The Jews had their own water! (20:17)
9. Why was Mt. Har given that name? "A mountain of a mountain" (20:22)
10. The Canaanites attacked Bnei Yisrael after Aharon died, but they were not Canaanites. Who were they? (21:1)

From the Rabbis

11. Where did we see this rock before (the rock that gave the people the water)? (Ramban)
12. On what calendar date did Miriam die? (Seder Olam)
13. Who really was punished by Hashem telling Moshe that he will not enter Eretz Yisrael? (Malbim)

Midrash

14. How did Hashem make it easier for Bnei Yisrael to defeat Sichon and his army?

Haftara - Sho-f'tim

15. Why did Yiftach's brothers expel Yiftach from the family?

Relationships

- a) Nadav - Aminadav
- b) Elisheva - Pinchas
- c) Merari - Machli
- d) Efrayim - Mupim
- e) Sh'eila - Peretz

ANSWERS

1. To purify a person who had become Tamei, impure, by contact with a dead body.
2. In Kadesh in the desert in the 40th year after the Exodus.
3. On Rosh Chodesh Av.
4. He had Moshe make a copper snake and everybody bitten by a snake would be healed when he sees Moshe's copper snake.
5. Sichon and Og.
6. That we humans do not have permission to think too much over it.
7. Moshe
8. When staying at a hotel, we should buy food from the hotel, to help them make money.

9. The mountain was shaped as if it was a mountain on top of a mountain.

10. Amalekites.

11. This rock gave Yishmael and Hagar water in the desert. And the same rock gave Bnei Yisrael water at Mara.

12. The 10th of Nissan.

13. Bnei Yisrael would suffer by not having Moshe as their leader.

14. Hashem had the Edomites leave their cities and combine to be one army and fight one battle with the Jews.

15. Because he was from a different mother.

Relationships

a) Grandson & Grandfather

b) Grandmother & Grandson

c) Father & Son

d) First Cousins

e) Half Brothers