

PHILOTORAH

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
רְפוּאָת הַנַּפְשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לְפְצוּעֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה, וּלְנִפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוּר וְאֲנִטִּישְׁמִיּוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל – וּבְכֹל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם, עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel, and may He end this war with success and peace for Klal Yisrael.



YERUSHALAYIM in/out times for Shabbat Parshat **CHUKAT**

ז' תמוז ה'תשפ"ד • July 12-13, '24

 **7:12PM** PLAG (earliest) **6:19PM** •   **8:28PM** R' Tam **9:04PM**

For other locales, click on the Z'MANIM link

[PhiloTorah \(207chu\) - 1 - all@once file](#)

Kiddush L'vana

With the molad of Tammuz last Shabbat morning, the first opportunity for Kiddush L'vana according to Minhag Yerushalayim (three full days after the molad) is Tuesday night, July 9th.

For 7-days-after-the-molad people, first op is Motza'ei Shabbat Parshat Chukat, July 13th.

That same night will be popular for shuls/communities/people who usually say KL on Motza"Sh.

TAMUZ

We all know that the 17th of Tamuz until the 29th of the month are mournful days for the Churban of the Beit HaMikdash, the first and the second. These last 13 days of Tamuz are followed by the first 9½ days of Av, together, known as the Three Weeks.

Because of events associated with 17 Tamuz, the whole month is treated as a 'dangerous' month for the Jewish People.

But there is another side to Tamuz.

According to our tradition, the 3rd of Tamuz is the date when Yehoshua invoked a unique miracle:

Then Yehoshua spoke to HaShem on the

day when HaShem delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, SHEMESH B'GIVON DOM, V'YAREI'ACH B'EMEK AYALON - "Sun, stand still upon Giv-on, and Moon in the valley of Ayalon" (Yehoshua 10:12).

How can that have been? Would that not mess up the orbits of the Moon around the Earth and the orbit of the Earth-Moon around the Sun?

It definitely would. If we were talking about the laws of planetary motion, which is part of the natural way of the world.

But we are talking about a Divine suspension of the Laws of Nature by the One who created the world, and its Laws of Nature.

However you want to explain the miracle recorded in Yehoshua, the fact of the matter is that G-d's miracles come in two types - part of nature and beyond/above nature.

We need to ponder these miracles and appreciated G-d for them. But we must also ponder and learn about nature - in this case, to learn about the Sun and the Moon when they behave 'normally', and appreciated the Creator all the more.

And this sets a different tone for Tamuz.

And don't forget Zechariya's prophecy that will see the sad day of 17 Tamuz (and the other three fasts based on Churban Beit HaMikdash) become a festive day, when the Beit HaMikdash will be rebuilt.

More in TAMUZ

According to the Book of Jubilees, Yaakov and family arrived in Goshen on the first of Tamuz. Thus, it is the anniversary of the first Jewish community in Chutz LaAretz. On the first of Tamuz in 1940, a moshav - appropriately called SHE'AR YASHUV - was established in Eretz Yisrael.

A petition by Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael for official permission to practice Judaism in England was granted by the Council of State, 1656. This had widespread ramifications throughout the British Empire. *Ed. note: Sounds crazy, no? That a Jew should need permission to practice Judaism. Food for thought.*

4 Tamuz - Yahrzeit of Rabbeinu Tam (Yaakov ben Meir), 1171. One of the most renowned Ashkenazi Jewish rabbis and leading French Tosafists, a leading halachic authority in his generation, and a grandson of Rashi. Known as RABBEINU (our teacher), he acquired the Hebrew suffix TAM, meaning straightforward; it was originally used in Parshat To-I'dot to describe his biblical namesake, Yaakov Avinu.

5 Tamuz was designated as a fast day in memory of approx. 50,000 Ukrainian Jews who were killed in Uman and other cities, 1768. On the same date in 1788, a further massacre of Oman's Jews occurred.

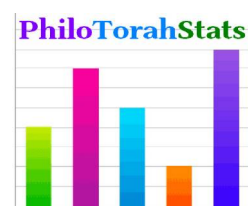
6 Tamuz - 24 wagonloads of talmudic volumes and 200 other rabbinic manu-

scripts were burned in Paris, 1242.

6 Tamuz - the Hebrew date of the Rescue at Entebbe, July 4th, 1976.

7 Tamuz - The Jewish Brigade, attached to the British army in World War II, was formed 1942. 23 years later, Moshe Sharett, second Prime Minister of the State of Israel, died (1965). He was involved in the formation of the Jewish Brigade.

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

PhiloTorah Stats Dept here - skip the following if you don't like stats.

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.

Again, to show the very uneven distribution of mitzvot in the Torah: Chukat has 3 (so 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 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 his 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.

[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, their 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 (according to 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. 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 vulner-

able 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 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.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**
Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

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

GIBOR CHAYIL - Do We Care?

V'YIFTACH HAGIL'ADI HAYA GIBOR CHAYIL - quite a powerful opening to our haftara - "Yiftach from Gil'ad was a GIBOR CHAYIL." GIBOR CHAYIL! That phrase is often misunderstood as describing a brave warrior when, in fact, it depicts an individual with outstanding attributes, not necessarily including military prowess. The expression is used to define as a person who is "accomplished", "skillful", or "gifted". Throughout the Tanach, only a few individuals were described as GIBOR CHAYIL, among them: Bo'az (Ruth 2:1), the judge, Gid'on (Shof'tim 6:12), King Sha'ul (Shmuel Alef 9:1) and even David HaMelech (16: 18).

We would imagine, therefore, that Yiftach must have been quite an outstanding individual to have been included in such outstanding company! So we would think... until we reach the very next phrase: V'HU BEN ISHA ZONA - he was born to Gil'ad, his father, out of wedlock. Clearly, such a "tainted" lineage had no bearing on the Tanach's depiction of Yiftach as a GIBOR CHAYIL

- but it had much bearing on the treatment he received from his brothers, from his tribe and, in the end, treatment that impacted his entire life story.

Yiftach's (half)-brothers denied him any rights to a share in their father's estate, as his mother had never been married to his father. In an effort to distance him from the family and the estate, they chased him away from their home, forcing him to flee to Eretz Tov (a scarcely inhabited area of Aram). There, he attracted ANASHIM REIKIM, refugees who, like Yiftach, had no home or estate - or means of support - and, in time, formed a small army.

[Parenthetically, I would point out that David, another GIBOR CHAYIL, was forced to flee the palace by Sha'ul's attempt to prevent him from inheriting the throne, and escaped to Adulam where he formed a small army that brought victories for Israel (!)]

With this background to the Yiftach story, we better understand the haftara, including why the leaders of Gil'ad approached Yiftach to lead their fight against the invading Amonim and how he was successful in defeating the enemy. It was during the negotiations with Ammon that Yiftach recalled the factual events found in this week's parasha, proving that the land legitimately belonged to Israel. But, to no avail. (It seems that historical proofs have no impact on enemies who wish to take Eretz HaKodesh from Am HaKodesh!).

But I find it most interesting to compare the events in the parasha to those in the haftara. In both stories we read of Israel's desire to avoid war, negotiating with the enemy before any hostilities would begin. In both cases - whether when Israel faced Sichon or when she faced B'nei Ammon - the enemy rejected their peaceful solutions. And so, in both stories, the enemy attacked Israel.

But the contrast is equally interesting and, perhaps, even more revealing. Note that, in the Torah's narrative, Moshe's name is strangely missing. It was YISRA'EL who sent agents to negotiate, YISRA'EL who was attacked and YISRA'EL who was victorious. No specific leader leading the negotiations with Sichon is mentioned, no general gathering or training the army is named and no great hero bringing Israel to victory is specified. This was a united effort - a national campaign - so much so, that no one person is singled out, not even Moshe or Yehoshua. And, not surprisingly, it is this victory that began Israel's KIBUSH HA'ARETZ, conquest of the land.

On the other hand, the haftara tells us a story of a fractious people who would drive out a GIBOR CHAYIL in order to prevent him from inheriting from his father. It was a community that, when threatened by an enemy, could find no leader among them to protect them from the enemy. And, as a result, it was a victory that eventually led to a civil war

and the death of 42,000 Israelites (see Shof'tim 12:1-7).

And this is why it is so important for us to both compare and contrast the parasha and haftara. By doing so, we have learned the difference between the pre-conquest era of cooperation and the pre-monarchial era, of disunity and civil war. A difference between victory and tragedy.

And, a lesson we must learn today as well. ✨



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

KORACH

• and three Unexplaineds

First of all, there are four.

Rosh Chodesh - the tops of the word CHODESH.

CHEILEV and BEN are both followed by the word YITZHAR in the sedra.

The footstool, ottoman (or whatever you call it is for the statement at the beginning of the Shabbat-R"Ch haftara that ... the Earth is G-d's footstool (HADOM)

Candle with the question How much? (in French). How much is candle? 50+200, the 250 Ketoret bringers, part of Korach's rebellion.

CHUKAT



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 g'matriya 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 CHESHBON, 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 CHESHBON. 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 SHELEMET (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, 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). 🐮 And one wordy Unexplained.

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

Descartes's Error

Chukat

In his 2011 bestseller, *The Social Animal*, New York Times columnist David Brooks writes:

We are living in the middle of the revolution in consciousness. Over the past few years, geneticists, neuroscientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, and others have made great strides in understanding the building blocks of human flourishing. And a core finding of their work is that we are not primarily

products of our conscious thinking. We are primarily the products of thinking that happens below the level of awareness.

Too much takes place in the mind for us to be fully aware of it. Timothy Wilson of the University of Virginia estimates that the human mind can absorb 11 million pieces of information at any given moment. We can be conscious of only a tiny fraction of this. Most of what is going on mentally lies below the threshold of awareness.

One result of the new neuroscience is that we are becoming aware of the hugely significant part played by emotion in decision-making. The French Enlightenment emphasised the role of reason and regarded emotion as a distraction and distortion. We now know scientifically how wrong this is.

Antonio Damasio, in his *Descartes's Error*, tells the story of a man who, as the result of a tumour, suffered damage to the frontal lobes of his brain. He had been known to have a high IQ, was well-informed, and had an excellent memory. But after surgery to remove the tumour, his life went into free-fall. He was unable to organise his time. He made bad investments that cost him his savings. He divorced his wife, married a second time, and rapidly divorced again. He could still reason perfectly but had lost the ability to feel emotion. As a result, he was unable to make sensible choices.

Another man with a similar injury found it impossible to make decisions at all. At the end of one session, Damasio suggested two possible dates for their next meeting. The man then took out a notebook, began listing the pros and cons of each, talked about possible weather conditions, potential conflicts with other engagements and so on, for half an hour, until Damasio finally interrupted him, and made the decision for him. The man immediately said, "That's fine", and went away.

It is less reason than emotion that lies behind our choices, and it takes emotional intelligence to make good choices. The problem is that much of our emotional life lies beneath the surface of the conscious mind.

That, as we can now see, is the logic of CHUKIM, the "statutes" of Judaism, the laws that seem to make no sense in terms of rationality. These are laws like the prohibition of sowing mixed seeds together (k'layim); of wearing cloth of mixed wool and linen (shaatnez); and of eating milk and meat together. The law of the Red Heifer with which our parsha begins, is described as the chok par excellence:

"This is the statute of the Torah" (Bamidbar 19:2).

There have been many interpretations of the chukim throughout the ages. But in the light of recent neuroscience, we can suggest that they are laws designed to

bypass the prefrontal cortex, the rational brain, and create instinctive patterns of behaviour to counteract some of the darker emotional drives at work in the human mind.

We know for example - Jared Diamond has chronicled this in his book *Collapse* - that wherever humans have settled throughout history they have left behind them a trail of environmental disaster, wiping out whole species of animals and birds, destroying forests, damaging the soil by over-farming and so on.

The prohibitions against sowing mixed seeds, mixing meat and milk, combining wool and linen, and so on, create an instinctual respect for the integrity of nature. They establish boundaries. They set limits. They inculcate the feeling that we may not treat our animal and plant environment however we wish. Some things are forbidden - like the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden. The whole Eden story, set at the dawn of human history, is a parable whose message we can understand today better than any previous generation: Without a sense of limits, we will destroy our ecology and discover that we have lost paradise.

As for the ritual of the Red Heifer, this is directed at the most destructive pre-rational instinct of all: what Sigmund Freud called *thanatos*, the death instinct. He described it as something "more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle

which it over-rides". In his essay *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, he wrote that "a portion of the [death] instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness", which he saw as "the greatest impediment to civilisation."

The Red Heifer ritual is a powerful statement that the holy is to be found in life, not death. Anyone who had been in contact with a dead body needed purification before entering the sanctuary or Temple. Kohanim had to obey stricter rules, and the Kohen Gadol even more so.

This made biblical Judaism highly distinctive. It contains no cult of worship of dead ancestors, or seeking to make contact with their spirits. It was probably to avoid the tomb of Moshe becoming a holy site that the Torah says, "to this day no one knows where his grave is" (D'varim 34:6). God and the holy are to be found in life. Death defiles.

The point is - and that is what recent neuroscience has made eminently clear - this cannot be achieved by reason alone. Freud was right to suggest that the death instinct is powerful, irrational, and largely unconscious, yet under certain conditions it can be utterly devastating in what it leads people to do.

The Hebrew term *CHOK* comes from the verb meaning, "to engrave". Just as a statute is carved into stone, so a behavioural habit is carved in depth into

our unconscious mind and alters our instinctual responses. The result is a personality trained to see death and holiness as two utterly opposed states - just as meat (death) and milk (life) are.

Chukim are Judaism's way of training us in emotional intelligence, above all a conditioning in associating holiness with life, and defilement with death. It is fascinating to see how this has been vindicated by modern neuroscience.

Rationality, vitally important in its own right, is only half the story of why we are as we are. We will need to shape and control the other half if we are successfully to conquer the instinct to aggression, violence, and death that lurks not far beneath the surface of the conscious mind.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) **How do you think emotion plays a role in decision-making?**
- (2) **How does the Red Heifer ritual address the death instinct?**
- (3) **Can understanding our unconscious mind help us control aggression and violence?**

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Parsha

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

The Time Has Come to Leave the Tent

For thousands of years in the Diaspora, without the Beit HaMikdash or a country of our own, the Jewish people were in survival mode. Many laws discussed in the Torah, including those in this week's parsha, Chukat, lost their practical applicability. Yet our Sages, understanding that the Torah never loses its relevance, sought deeper meanings in these laws and verses.

Reish Lakish's explanation in the Gemara (B'rachot 63b) illustrates this very approach in his reinterpretation of the verse, "This is the Torah, a person who dies in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:14), which refers to ritual impurity caused by a dead body. Recognizing its lack of relevance for non-Kohanim in his time, Reish Lakish suggested an alternate meaning: only one who 'dies in the tent' - who toils in Torah study - can become a true Torah scholar.

This interpretation, born of Diaspora necessity, encouraged sacrifice of comfort and ease of life for the sake of Torah study. However, in our contemporary reality as a sovereign nation in Israel, this explanation is no longer pertinent and continues to be misapplied by some voices of fellow observant Jews who abuse this teaching to justify

refusing IDF enlistment - even during a MILCHEMET MITZVA (obligatory war) like the one in which we are embroiled today.

This misinterpretation contradicts the Rambam's clear ruling based on the Mishna in Sota: "In a milchemet mitzva, the entire nation must go out to war, even a groom from his chamber, and a bride from her pavilion" (Hilchot Malachim u'Milchamot 7:4). Furthermore, it ignores the mitzva of not standing idly by while your friend's blood is being spilled (Vayikra 19:16).

We would never authorize violating Shabbat, consuming non-kosher food, stealing, or forgoing mitzvot between Jews for the sake of studying Torah. How, then, has it become acceptable that Torah study trumps the law of pikuach nefesh - saving a life - and of milchemet mitzva, defending our sovereign nation under attack? (It should also be pointed out that the current system doesn't actually ensure that those exempt from army service on grounds of learning Torah are even really learning Torah. There is evidence that many obtain exemptions under false pretenses, and are not actually learning in the Beit Midrash either, so they are simply avoiding their national duty, contributing neither to Torah scholarship nor to the country's defense.)

In our times, the true fulfillment of "dying in the tent" is not reflected by pursuing or advocating a life secluding

ourselves in the Beit Midrash. Rather, it refers to the righteous men and women who, out of dedication to Torah and religious observance, temporarily leave the study hall to defend the Jewish people on the frontlines. At the same time, many go to great lengths to continue learning Torah even on the battlefield, embodying the sanctity of Torah in the darkest moments.

With so many soldiers and civilians having lost their lives, it's time to set aside outdated Diaspora patterns of thought and action. We must unite, as the Torah mandates, to ensure the wellbeing and flourishing of the entire Jewish people. It's time to "leave the tent"; not God forbid to abandon Torah, but to fulfill its true intent in our generation.

The logo for PhiloTorah D'var Torah, consisting of the letters P, T, D, and T in a stylized, orange, blocky font.

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

The Para Aduma - Eigel haZahav (mis)connection?

Rashi in the beginning of Parshat Chukat does something unusual. We find 'regular' Rashi with various words and phrases commented on. This is how we see Rashi on the Chumash, throughout.

But then, Rashi says that the above was

explanations based on understanding the words and understanding the halacha.

He then adds, Midrash Aggada I have copied based on the understanding of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan. (He was a contemporary of Rashi, perhaps older than Rashi - both from France.)

What follows is a series of connections between the Para Aduma and the golden calf.

Have them take for you - from their own possessions, just as the people took their gold jewelry and gave it for the EIGEL, so too they take of their own and give towards the Para Aduma.

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.

T'mima (blemish-free) - Just as the Israelites, who were perfect, but became blemished. Let this come and atone for them so that they regain their perfection

That a yoke (or any burden) has not been placed on the cow - Just as they cast off from themselves the yoke of Heaven.

Elazar HaKohen - just as they assembled against Aharon, who was a kohen, to make the calf, but because Aharon made the calf, this service was not performed through him, for the prosecution cannot serve as the defense (rather is son atones for the father as the mother cow

atones for her son, the calf).

Burn the cow - as the calf was burned.

As a keepsake - Just as the transgression of the calf is preserved throughout the generations for retribution, for there is no reckoning [punishment] which does not include a reckoning for the calf, as it says, "But on the day I make an accounting [of sins upon them], I will bring their sin to account..." (Sh'mot 32:34).

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 use of the Para Aduma Potion is 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, is this really a misconnection?

The answer is most definitely, NO!

Let's look at things this way. If 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, then 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 that she was, and like 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 a dead body to be 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. **PTDT**

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



What to tell the Goyim

Chukat

Growing up in a non-observant, but fiercely proud Jewish family, there were a few Yiddishisms which were often heard. One was GEI SHLUFEN (Go to sleep!), but more fascinating was it's a SHANDE FAR DI GOYIM (It's an embarrassment before the Gentiles). We (and all Jews for thousands of years) were very concerned what the surrounding Gentiles thought about us and our behavior. So, this week's Torah reading is very enlightening on this topic, because Moshe Rabbeinu sends messengers to the rulers of countries which our ancestors would like to pass through.

The first group which we encounter on the southernmost reaches of the Trans-Jordan territory, is our cousins the Edomites, descendants of Eisav, our uncle. Here's what Moshe wants their rulers to be told:

From Kadesh, Moshe sent messengers to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardships that have befallen us; that our ancestors went down to Egypt, that we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and that the

Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our ancestors. We cried to the Eternal who heard our plea, sending a messenger who freed us from Egypt. Now we are in Kadesh, the town on the border of your territory. Please let us cross through your land. We won't pass through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will walk on the King's Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have crossed your border.' (Bamidbar 20:14-17)

Okay, there are a few obvious points. First, we do identify ourselves as family. Second, we give a short history of how we got to the present situation. Then we finally get to our specific request, which we present with tremendous respect and deference. As you can imagine, there are a plethora of ways to parse this little presentation. We will explore just a few.

There is a point of view, which I believe is important to know, but I totally reject. That position is that we didn't care whatsoever what Edom thought. The entire message was a secret message about how the world works, and only Jews were supposed to get it. The Ma'or V'Shemesh writes:

I believe that this entire issue is related to God's intent when creating Humanity in this world: Which is to free the sparks of KEDUSHA in everything. This redemption is achieved by attaching oneself to the supernal root of one's soul. This is accomplished through visits to the

TZADIK.

In other words, this famous Chassidische Rebbe (or TZADIK) is telling us that the information in the message was for future Jews (especially Chassidim) who must realize that any reference to travel describes the Chasid's trek from his tiny Shtetel to the court of his Rebbe. We're not talking to gentiles and we're not on the road to Eretz Yisrael. Fascinating, but not helpful in understanding the issue at hand for us and our ancestors.

Clearly, the Rebbe (Reb Kalman Kalonymus HaLevi Epstein) is not interested in telling his non-Jewish neighbors in Cracow anything.

On the other hand, most commentaries do have ideas which can inform our relations with our neighbors. Let's begin with the discussion about who were the messengers. Some suggest that they were actual angels, because the Hebrew MAL'ACHIM can mean either earthly or heavenly surrogates. Others suggest that Moshe went himself to underline the importance of the mission.

However, I find the opinion of the Netziv (living in the Russian Empire towards the end of the 19th century) interesting: it teaches us that he didn't send men of Yisrael. Rather the messengers were from Edom or Amon. The reason for this is that Jews shouldn't be alone amongst gentiles. We also saw what happened to the messengers sent by David to Amon... (Shmuel Alef 10, the messengers were slaughtered).

Clearly, the Netziv had a standoffish approach to gentile authorities. Probably with good reason.

Next, we should understand why Moshe thought it important to call the Edomites 'brethren'. There are a number of authorities who emphasize that our 'brothers' should feel some empathy for us, because the original prophecy (or 'promise') of the inevitable exile in the Covenant between the Parts was given to Avraham Avinu who was their ancestor, too. So, therefore, the message was: Be nice to us because we suffered, and you were spared.

Rav Yitzchak Eitzshalom emphasized that we should call them brethren because they are bound to our fortunes. In the Messianic Age, the descendants of Eisav will pay for any evil intentions towards us, as pointed out by the prophet Amos (9:11-12). Our fates are intertwined whether you like it or not.

Finally, why is it important to tell them 'Eternal who heard our plea'? Didn't they know the story of the Exodus and the Crossing of the Sea? It's mentioned in Shirat HaYam: The chiefs of Edom will be terrified (Sh'mot 15:15). So, what new info is being told? The Edomites might have thought that the Exodus and aftermath happened through human enterprise. It's critical that they know it was Divine intervention.

So, what does all this mean for us? How should it affect our relations with

non-Jews, and what we tell them? First of all, ignoring the Mystics, it is clear that we should feel the need to inform the world of our intentions and ideas. But what should we expect?

Rav Yehuda Amital wrote: I remember when Prime Minister Golda Meir visited Gush Etzion. People asked her why Israel did not engage in better public relations (hasbara) overseas. She replied: "You don't understand our problem. The gentiles are incapable of understanding us - not because of faulty public relations, but because our entire enterprise here is absurd. A person has to be Jewish to understand our hasbara."

Because they won't listen, should we refrain from the enterprise? No! Rav Amital concluded: We are entrusted with the task of strengthening people's confidence in the continued existence of the State of Israel. Israel is not a transient episode. For "God's word is forever, and not a single word of His will return unfulfilled." Had the state been a human creation, the work of Ben Gurion and his comrades, it could have been a transient phenomenon. But it is a Divine work, the fulfillment of a prophetic vision, and we must say this openly!

In spite of the fact that they won't listen, we must try and tell our story. So that we can live to see what Rav Nethaniel Helfgot described: Edom's message then was clear: You shall not pass! ... Edom has not learned the lesson of what God did to the Egyptians, which we

commemorate every Pesach. May all the Edomites; re-learn this lesson speedily, in our days.

This whole scenario reminds me of when I taught and gave sermons. Educate like crazy, but keep expectations low. We teach the story to all, and don't ignore the gentiles. But don't expect them to pay attention until Redemption! 🙏

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • www.ravkooktorah.com



Even in the Hour of Death

While the verse is speaking of ritual impurity connected with death, the Sages derived an important lesson about Torah study:

“Rabi Yonatan said: One should never abstain from attending the Beit Midrash and Torah study, even in the hour of death. As it says, ‘This is the Torah: when a person dies in a tent’ (Bamidbar 19:14). Even in the hour of death, one should engage in Torah study” (Shabbat 83b).

Why did the rabbis stress that one should study Torah in all situations, even on one's deathbed?

Eternal Light

All societies have codes of moral conduct. The primary function of a moral code is to regulate communal life, so

that members of society will assist rather than harm one another. It follows that these codes of behavior are only necessary when one is part of a community.

One may look at the Torah as simply a body of moral teachings, and as such, only relevant during one's lifetime. In fact, the Torah is more than just a moral code. All of its teachings, even those which regulate society, are meant to uplift society in a way that prepares both its collective spirit as well as its individual members for eternal life.

Torah study remains relevant even during one's final moments, as one prepares to leave the transient life of this world and enter eternal life.

The Tent of Torah

Rabi Yonatan used the metaphor of one studying in the “tent of Torah”. This tent is not a place of private, individual study. Rather, it signifies a fellowship of Torah scholars, the mind-sharpening milieu of the Beit Midrash. One might think that this form of communal study is only important to cultivate friendship and camaraderie. The Sages, however, emphasized that Torah study of the Beit Midrash is deeply bound to eternal holiness. This collective study sanctifies time and elevates life.

Thus, even at the hour of death, one should be engaged in Torah study. All of Torah, even those laws which serve to regulate society, illuminate life with a

timeless light. Its details are permeated with nobility and holiness. So that “when a person dies”, he should remain “in the tent” – in the company of scholars who love and cherish Torah. Then one will continue to grow in its eternal light, “going from strength to strength.”

As the Sages taught: “Torah scholars have no rest, not in this world nor in the next” (B'rachot 64a).

Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 163-164

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno

by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Shlomo HaMelech and the Para Aduma

Chukat

"All this I tested with wisdom. I thought I will become wise - but it was far from me" (Kohelet 7:23).

What was too difficult for even wise Shlomo HaMelech to understand? The Midrash explains:

Shlomo said: "I delved and examined the entire Torah, and I found it logical." But when he came to the section of the Para Aduma, he said: "I thought I would be wise, but it is far from me."

Why was the mitzva of Para Aduma

beyond Shlomo's wisdom?

The Extraordinary Restaurant

A traveler once arrived at a distant city, where he came across an elegant restaurant. But this was no ordinary restaurant. There was no menu! At the entrance hung an unusual sign: "In this house you will find whatever you desire. Here we serve every dish!"

Intrigued, the traveler entered the restaurant and ordered the fanciest dish he could think of: roast duck, sauteed with vintage wine. But when he heard the order, the maitre d' sadly informed the guest that this particular dish is not available.

"What do you mean, it's not available?" cried the disappointed man. "The sign claims that your restaurant provides every dish that a person could want!"

"That is true", replied the maitre d'. "But recently a law was passed prohibiting eating this particular dish. Since no one will ask for it, why should I stock its ingredients?"

Shlomo's Special Wisdom

It says that "God gave Shlomo wisdom... like the sand on the seashore" (Melachim Alef 4). In what way was his wisdom "like the sand"? The Sages explained that his unique wisdom paralleled the Jewish people, who were blessed to be as numerous as grains of sand. God provided Shlomo with the necessary

wisdom so that he would be able to answer the questions of each Jew.

Shlomo HaMelech was granted this gift so that he could answer any question that a person might have regarding any of the Torah's mitzvot. But with regard to the Para Aduma, there was no need for this special wisdom. "This is the law (CHOK) of the Torah." God decreed that this mitzva should be a CHOK, a mitzva that the Jewish people would accept even without understanding it.

Insight into mitzvot is a wonderful thing, but we also need to recognize our intellectual limits. The mitzva of Para Aduma indicates that our connection to mitzvot is deeper than human logic and reason.

Since no one would ask Shlomo to explain this mitzva, he had no need for special wisdom to understand it. He was like the restaurant in the parable that could serve any dish requested - except for the dish which was prohibited by the king.

Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 351-353

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher z"l

Para Aduma - A Little Dab Will Do Ya

“He (the defiled person) shall purify himself (with the potion of the ashes of the Red Cow) on the third and on the seventh day, then he will become pure...”

(Bamidbar 19:12).

The classic example of a CHOK (a Mitzva beyond human understanding), is the Red Cow, whose ashes are used to purify a person from defilement from a dead body. As Rashi notes, immersion in a MIKVEH is insufficient to remove the TUM'A conveyed by a dead body, even though MIKVEH is effective for many other types of TUM'A.

As our verse describes, the purification process of the Red Cow ashes takes place on the third and the seventh day, when these ashes are mixed with water and sprinkled on the impure person. The Rambam (Hilchot Para Aduma 12) rules that it is sufficient for the ashes to be sprinkled even just on the tip of one finger. This reminds me of the old Brylcreem commercial which said, “A Little Dab Will Do Ya.” Even one drop of Para Aduma ashes causes purification to take full effect.

Despite being a CHOK, Rav Pam explains that Para Aduma contains a fascinating practical insight to everyday life. When the Torah requires immersion in a MIKVEH to remove impurity, EACH and EVERY part of the person's body must be immersed. Even if just one hair is not covered by the MIKVEH water, the entire immersion is invalid and must be repeated.

Yet, regarding the ashes of the Red Cow (called Waters of Purification), even if a tiny part of the body, like the fingernail

is sprinkled, it is sufficient for the person to attain total purification. Why is there a difference between the power of the Para Aduma ashes to purify, as opposed to TOTAL immersion in a MIKVEH to become pure.

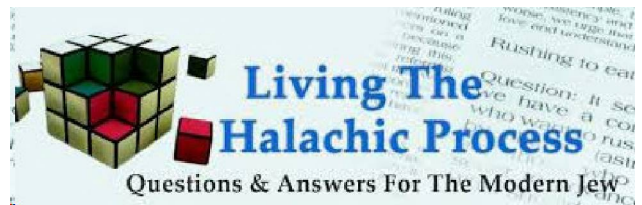
Rav Pam clarifies the difference between the purification of the Red Cow ashes versus the MIKVEH. Tum'a is a symbol of sin and purification is a symbol of T'SHUVA. Ideally, a person should strive to become a complete Baal T'shuva for ALL his sins. Nevertheless, for the majority of people this can be extremely difficult, if not almost impossible.

Thus, instead of becoming discouraged and giving up altogether, one should at least attempt the lesser method of purification, symbolized by the Red Cow ashes. Let us attempt to improve in at least ONE aspect of our Mitzva observance and to correct at least one character deficiency.

This method will be one huge step in the right direction, as the Mishna in Avot states, "One Mitzva brings along another Mitzva." With G-d's help, one will STEP BY STEP bring significant changes in his Divine Service and Mitzva Performance.

-ESP

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH



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

How Much Water to Use for Netilat Yadayim

Question: Based on what I have learned, our standard washing cups hold much more water than is needed for netilat yadayim. We in Israel certainly cannot afford to waste water. How much water must the cup hold, and how much must one pour over each hand?

Answer: There is a huge difference between the basic halacha and the practical application in this matter, and it is important to try arrive at a reasonable perspective.

The required volume of a cup used for netilat yadayim is a revi'it.¹ There is a well-known machloket as to the volume of a revi'it. The most prominent opinions are those of Rav Chayim Na'eh – that it is 86 cubic milliliters (approx. 3 oz.) – and of the Chazon Ish – that it is 149 ml. (approx. 5 oz.).² While this is an important machloket regarding such issues as Kiddush, it is usually not crucial regarding the cup for netilat yadayim, as it is difficult to find a cup for

¹ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 159:1.

² See Shemirat Shabbat K'Hilchata (5770 edition), p. 40.

that purpose that does not hold the volume of the most stringent opinion.

Regarding the amount of water needed for washing, one does not have to use an entire *revi'it*. However, there are advantages to using a *revi'it*. When one pours less than a *revi'it* on the hands, the water becomes *tamei*,³ and if the water goes beyond the area that needs washing and then returns to the critical part of the hands, the hands become *tamei* again.⁴ This requires one to keep his hands raised the whole time so that any water that runs off will not return. If, however, a *revi'it* is used at one time, even if it is one *revi'it* for both hands together, the water does not become *tamei* and it is not a problem if the water goes beyond the hand area and comes back.⁵ According to most opinions,⁶ when a *revi'it* is used, there is also no need to wash the hands twice.⁷

In truth, however, using even significantly more than a *revi'it* of water is beneficial, as water must reach the entire area that needs to be washed at one time.⁸ There is significant discussion concerning how much of the hand must be washed. One opinion is that it is only the fingers, up to their connection to the palms. The other opinion, which is the

accepted practice under normal circumstances, is to wash all of each hand, until its connection to the wrist.⁹ The *Bi'ur Halacha*¹⁰ advises that since one washes the entire hand, “it is prudent to be careful not to use an exact amount of water. Rather, he should wash with an abundance [of water], for if he uses exactly a *revi'it*, it is very likely that part of a hand will remain unwashed.”

There is a famous story (which comes in many versions) about Rav Yisrael Salanter, who was observed using a minimal amount of water for *netilat yadayim*. He did not want his fulfillment of the mitzva in the preferred way to come at the expense of someone else – i.e., the servant schlepping the water. This might support your suggestion that in our situation of limited water supply,¹¹ we should curtail our ritual use of water to the minimum amount required. Indeed, under the correct circumstances (it is likely that Rav Salanter usually used a larger quantity, and the case of the story was one in which someone was uniquely affected), this is a very laudable approach. But although it is true that using ridiculously large amounts of water, which might cause others to have to wait on line until the person finishes

³ Ritually impure.

⁴ *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 162:1-2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See *Mishna Berura* 162:21, who explains the advantages of our *minhag* to wash twice anyway.

⁸ *Shulchan Aruch* op. cit. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.* 161:4.

¹⁰ *Ad loc.*

¹¹ This volume is being published as two unusually rainy winters replenished the Israeli water supply, but we do not know what the future holds.

washing, is likely more a sign of psychological compulsion or ignorance than righteousness, we should avoid being judgmental.

Furthermore, we would urge even those who are sensitive to the benefits of conservation to employ some balance and perspective. We would guess that the average religious family expends less than 1% of its water usage on netilat yadayim. If this is indeed the case, cutting back on other uses by a mere 0.5% will save as much water as cutting back on netilat yadayim by 50%. If one is already cutting back on water usage to his maximum in general, and he wants to include netilat yadayim as well, his idealism is praiseworthy, and it is fine to concentrate on washing the entirety of his hands with less water than most people need. But the great majority of the members of our society, who use water with less idealism, should not make a special issue of water conservation regarding the moderate amounts of water used for netilat yadayim.



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

MOSHE'S SIN

At a time of drought, a rock in the desert had the capacity to provide water. God therefore told Moshe (and Aharon) to speak to the rock.

Instead Moshe - under pressure from a difficult people - lost his temper and hit the rock, and God punished him severely.

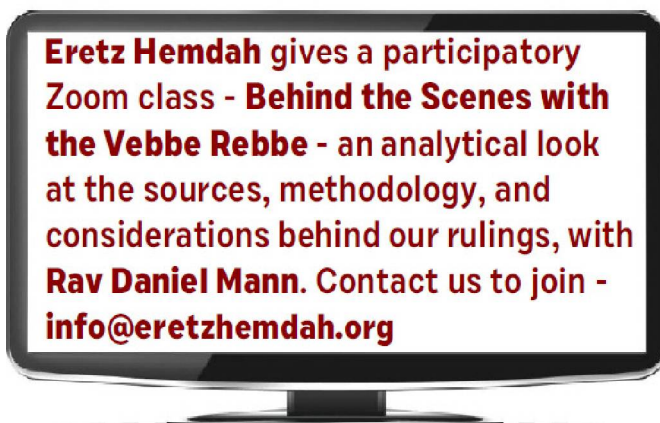
Yet at an earlier juncture, Moshe had been told to hit the rock. So what was the sin he now committed?

The Yalkut Shim'oni compares Moshe to a teacher. If a pupil needs a rebuke, it all depends, says the Yalkut, on his age and stage of development.

With a young pupil who doesn't yet know how to reason things out, the teacher is entitled to smack him; but with an older pupil, hitting is unlikely to get anywhere and the teacher should speak to him.

Moshe was not punished because the rock had done anything wrong, but because as a leader he was dealing with the people in an inappropriate way.

By this stage, they had matured sufficiently for a verbal rebuke.



A Lesson in Public Relations

Why is this sidra called CHUKAT, "a statute"?

Tradition divides the mitzvot into those which reason can and cannot elucidate. The latter are called statutes (CHUKIM).

Rashi says the nations of the world ask Israel why they keep commandments such as the rule of the Red Heifer. In response, the Israelites say, "It is a Divine decree, a statute!"

In other words, instead of seeking explanations for certain laws, we simply say it is the word of God.

This echoes the modern problem of public relations. We have to be smart enough we know which approach to take when outsiders question us - whether to try painstaking explanations, or to choose to say, "This is a mark of Jewish identity!" -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

Chukat

G-d said to Moshe: "Take the staff, assemble the congregation... and speak to the rock... You will bring out water from the rock and supply the people and their

cattle." Moshe took the staff that was before G-d, as He commanded him (20:7-9).

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

Yet on a similar occasion when the Israelites faced a shortage of water, G-d actually told Moshe to take the staff and hit the rock (Sh'mot 17:5-6). This time - some forty years later - G-d did not tell Moshe to hit the rock, but to speak to the rock.

In that case, why did He tell Moshe to take the staff that was 'before G-d'? Staffs don't help people to talk.

The Kli Yakar holds that the staff that was 'before G-d' was not Moshe's, but Aharon's. This was significant. After the revolt of Korach, Aharon's staff blossomed flowers when the staffs representing the other tribes did not (Bamidbar 17:23). G-d then ordered Moshe to place Aharon's staff in the Holy of Holies, as a warning to those might incite rebellion in the future (17:25-6). And just as G-d could make flowers blossom out of a staff, so could He bring water out of the rock.

That gave background to what followed. Aharon himself was a person of peace and strove to achieve results by peaceful means: "He loved peace and he pursued peace, he loved people, and would bring them close to the teachings of the

Torah" (Avot 1:12). For that reason, G-d instructed Moshe not take his own staff that he used to strike the Nile and bring forth blood, but the staff of Aharon, placed in the Holy of Holies. As an instruction to Moshe: to be like Aharon. Approach like Aharon: love peace and pursue peace. Achieve your aims peacefully. Lead the people with just enough persuasion to be effective. Speak to the rock, not strike the rock as last time. Speak to the rock.

But Moshe did not. He did exactly what he had done 40 years earlier. As then instructed. He struck the rock. But times had changed since there. He was now leading a new generation.

The Ohr HaChayim develops the importance of taking a new approach. He points out that the Torah opens the story by calling the Israelites KOL HA-EIDA, literally "the whole assembly". The Ohr HaChayim interprets that entire expression to mean that at that moment all the Israelites were upright, worthy people. As Rashi explains, the generation sentenced to die in the Wilderness had already passed on. Those present included the people who would enter the Land. They were not the same individuals that Moshe led out of Egypt and troubled him with their complaints, grumbles, and happenings, including the golden calf and the spies. The people he was now leading were not answerable for the sins of their fathers. In addition, following Miriam's death, the Israelites

were short of water. They complained: "Why have you bought us... to this evil place... there is no water to drink?" This, the Ohr HaChayim suggests, was a legitimate complaint, even if put indelicately and with more provocation than necessary. Why not follow a route to the Promised Land that did have water on the way?

With this background, the Ohr HaChayim considers that addressing the assembled Israelites: "Pay attention, you rebels!" indicated a lack of respect for the people he was leading. It was a new generation. Possibly he was angry at the way they expressed their fears of dying of thirst: "If only we would have perished before G-d, as happened to our brothers." In any case, these - unlike the previous generation - were people who then had an unblemished record of cooperation and good deeds.

"Pay attention you rebels!" was not the leadership frame for addressing the situation. Names stick: people don't forget them. He should have handled the situation with the qualities of his brother Aharon: "loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them close to the teachings of the Torah". According to the way G-d instructed him: by speaking to the rock. Not by battering it.

G-d was effectively telling Moshe that the generation now before him would be receptive to a gentle approach, not the more military one that justifiably

characterized his effecting Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim and all that followed in that generation. Moshe, however, admittedly under pressure, chose to stick to the tried and tested methods that he knew, rather than adapt his style to suitably lead a very different generation. It was thus time for someone new and in tune with those people to succeed to the title role. Thus, later on, G-d told Moshe to appoint Yehoshua to lead the people.



Presidents might put the past behind them, but is that the Jewish way? In this week's Parsha we come across the enigmatic law of the Red Heifer which is deemed to atone (partially) for the Sin of the Golden Calf. That might explain why this command was addressed not only to Moshe but also to Aharon who had played a central role in that catastrophic event.

But the red heifer would never atone completely for that national failing. After that event, and following Moshe's plea on behalf of the people, Hashem declares: "On the day that I make my account, I shall bring their sin to account against them" (Sh'mot 32:34). And what has been that account: the destruction

of the Batei Mikdash, dispersion, persecutions?

The proclamation at the Yad Vashem memorial reminds us that a people that does not recall its past will not learn the lessons for the future. Thus Israel beckons us and visiting nobility to recall the past horrors inflicted upon the Jewish people.

Likewise, through the ashes of the red heifer, Hashem motions us to recall our misdeeds and to search for the Tikun, the process of repair that will hasten our redemption.

The ashes of the Holocaust, perhaps, remind us of the ashes of the Red Heifer. Perhaps they serve as atonement, if not complete, then at least partial, so that all of mankind that has become contaminated through death can, with Hashem's help, become purified in the days to come to celebrate life and peace and unity. **MP**

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

A request from Anat Meir

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

"Shalom Sivan, my name is Anat Meir. My husband, Captain David Meir, fell in battle at Kibbutz Be'eri on Simchat Torah. If someone had told me prior to October 7th that I would lose my other half, I would have said that I would never

get out of bed again and that I would be done with God.

But then it happened. I lost what was most precious to me and yet today I somehow manage to get out of bed in the morning. And somehow my faith only gets stronger and my perspective on life has changed too.

I never imagined that my name would be seen on an announcement publicizing a mass gathering of women to pray for unity and redemption, or that I would be speaking about the mashiach. And I have a feeling that there are many who would identify with me, including those who have not suffered a personal loss. None of us are the same today as we were before.

Initially, I thought maybe I was crazy, trying to hold on to whatever I could since I had lost my entire life. But then I understood differently since I knew that my faith was profound and real. I raised my head, read and studied, and could not believe that everything that happened and will happen is written, that when prophecies of destruction come true, it is a sign that prophecies of redemption are sure to come.

I understand nothing except that something is happening here that is much bigger than us, something impossible to understand and yet full of hope for the future. It has been promised that, in the end, beautiful and perfect days will come, full of light more brilliant

than anything we could ever imagine.

Let's not sugarcoat reality. The road to a glorious future is hard and all of us know this. There were great tzadikim who did not want to live in our generation since they knew this would be a difficult time in every respect. And so we, a generation of elevated souls, are privileged to be alive today during this momentous time.

No, we do not have any idea how and when this will happen since we have no inkling of God's plans, but in the air we can smell that something uniquely extraordinary is taking place. And so I, who never would have imagined nine months ago that I would write something like this, am asking you to join us in prayer.

All women are invited to come or to pray wherever you are. All of us want peace, tranquility, security, and clarity, and I have no doubt that our prayers have an extremely powerful impact. It is said that in the merit of righteous women Israel was redeemed from Egypt. And it is also said that in the merit of righteous women, we will be redeemed once again."

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

Chukat

In this week's Parsha of Chukat, we seem to be in a time machine. We cover in the short span of this Parsha, thirty-eight years of travel. The first part of the Parsha, we read about the Israelites experiences in their second year of freedom from Egypt. However, the second part of the Parsha describes the calamities that took place already, during the fortieth year of travel in the desert prior to ascending into the Land of Canaan. All the thirty-eight years seem to be skipped over and ignored.

Nevertheless, looking carefully at the text, Parshat Chukat briefly makes mention of the different wars that the Israelites engaged in on their journey to the Promised Land. A miracle in itself that this fledgling Israelite people with little or no experience on the battlefield is able to survive such contact and be victorious, especially against battle hardened armies of the region.

In Bamidbar 21:14, the Parsha notes that these military campaigns and wars recorded in the book of the "War of the Lord." What is this book? Where is this book? Why does the Book of the Torah reveal to us the existence of another book?

The Book of G-d's Wars is a very strange

title. G-d and war seems to be opposites. Perhaps the Torah mention this book to enlighten the Jewish people to what is the real battle secret of G-d. The Sifrei in Parshat Eikev(40) writes the known phrase "the book and the sword came down from Heaven together." The Rabbis attribute these words to explain that these are two different ways of battle. They describe two different goals of war and two different philosophies regarding their people who use them. The Rabbis explain that Eisav chose the sword as his weapon. However, Yaakov chose the book. Perhaps teaching us, that the rest of the world chose the SAYIF - the sword as their implements of war while the Jewish people chose the SEFER - the book.

Parshat Chukat may seem to give little reference to those 38 years in the desert, yet with a little deeper look, it may actually be giving the secret of our survival throughout the thousands of years awaiting the Jewish people. Choose the Book as our secret of survival just as recorded during the different battles we had in the wilderness. The Book of G-d's Wars give us insight to what we really supported us to gain one victory after another in the desert. The Jewish people had the Torah – the Book of Hashem which gave us and gives us the advantage. 🏰

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

Chukat

Challenging Your Ethical Default

In revisiting the sin at Mei Meriva (20:7-13), we wonder why Aharon suffered the same fate as Moshe when HaShem declared, "you will not bring this congregation to the Land I have given them." Was it not Moshe who was the central figure in not complying with HaShem's directive (however understood by Chazal)? In fact, the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 19:9) appears to exonerate Aharon of any wrongdoing. Quoting the verse, "And to [the Tribe of] Levi, he said: 'Your TUMIM and URIM be to your righteous one whom You tested at Masa and with whom You strove at the waters of Meriva'" (D'varim 33:8), the Midrash asks, "What was Aharon's sin?" Based upon this Midrash, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, offers this important explanation (Sichot - 38 Parshat Chukat): "The verse does not state that they sinned, but rather that they did not sanctify Gd's Name (Bamidbar 20:12, D'varim 32:51). The punishment, it seems, was not for a sin which was committed, but rather for something which they did not do. Although it was Moshe who [according to Rashi] struck rather than speaking, Aharon was also punished because he hesitated rather than speaking immediately to the rock, and did not object when Moshe struck the rock instead of speaking to it."

In this understanding of Aharon's sin, the lesson is clear. As Rav Aharon elaborates, there are consequences to missed opportunities. The Talmud (B'rachot 5a) states that if a person is overcome with suffering, he should examine his deeds, and if he finds no specific transgression, he must entertain the possibility that his punishment is a consequence of wasting time that could have been spent on Torah study or other worthy pursuits. In other words, one has to answer for a missed opportunity.

In addition to this valuable insight, we may suggest another approach. From the powerful Akeida episode, Chazal have understood the greatness of Avraham in terms of his extraordinary ability to surmount and deny his natural and virtuous trait of chesed and obey Gd's command to offer his only son on the Altar. Often, to demonstrate the strength and depth of our faith in HaShem, we are tested by a command that insists that we abandon our "comfort zone" and submit to the Divine decree, inexplicable though it may appear.

Aharon's personality was defined by his love and pursuit of peace (Avot 1:12). Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl, in a remarkable essay (Sichot, Sh'mot 23), opines that it was precisely this righteous attribute that led Aharon to mistakenly construct the Golden Calf. "Better that I be blamed and not Israel" (Vayikra Rabba 10:3). Rav

Nebenzahl suggests that Aharon should have overcome and suppressed his compassionate nature and refused the sinful demand of the people even if it might have been at the expense of his own life. Moshe's rebuke of his brother (Sh'mot 32:21) may very well have alluded to this failing of Aharon. Could it be then, that also by Mei Meriva, Aharon's reticence and inaction in not wanting to reprimand his brother was another example of his inability to go against his natural ethos?

In any case, this second message is no less significant than the first. To act boldly and with uncommon courage to do the right thing when it's not "your thing"; for an otherwise reserved, diffident person to suddenly stand up and defend the weak and defenseless; for a recluse, a loner, to barge out of his door to support a just cause - and all at personal expense, be it material or physical - for such a person to be MAAVIR AL MIDOTAV, to override the measure of who he is", there is the great reward of having redeemed his existence and earned HaShem's most cherished of blessings! 🙌

Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

Why PARA ADUMA

The obvious question that is asked about the mitzva of Para Aduma is basically answered in the opening verse of the

parsha: ZOT CHUKAT HATORAH - this is the statute of the Torah - it is a CHOK. And by definition, a CHOK is not to be understood. We are allowed to search for meaning and reasons but, ultimately, it will elude us. As Shlomo HaMelech said: I thought I could become wise but it is beyond me (Kohelet 7:23). According to the midrash on Chukat, Shlomo referred to his inability to fathom and understand the mitzva of Para Aduma despite his research.

Chukim are part and parcel of the Torah. One of the reasons given for the juxtaposition of this parsha to the previous one on Korach is because Korach was trying to understand the laws of the Torah according to his limited knowledge. It didn't "make sense" to him that a cloak which was completely t'chelet still needed a p'til techelet or why a house full of sefarim would still require a mezuzah. The mitzva of Para Aduma comes to correct that misconception - a person should never think that he can fully understand the depths behind the laws of the Torah, even those that seem "logical". It certainly doesn't "make sense" that a procedure that purifies the impure should cause the pure one involved to thus become impure. That is the nature of a chok.

The word CHOK is from the word CHAKIKA - engraved, etched. Every mitzva of the Torah is etched into the essence of Creation. Midrash Rabba, Vayikra 35:4 tells us that chukim were

used to create the world. Every chok influences the order of behavior Above as well as below. Even a mitzva whose reason is not revealed in our earthly world influences the order of the workings of our world. The flowing of blessing into our world is dependent upon our fulfillment of the mitzvot. Something which, basically tells us this daily, but which we probably ignore as we glibly say the Sh'ma: V'HAYA IM SHAMO'A TISHM'U EL MITZVOTAI... - and it will be that if you observe my mitzvot..., then, as a result, Gd will send down the blessing of rain.

In some way, the purification engendered by the ashes of the Para Aduma remove the tum'ah contracted by contact with the dead. "Death is that partition that separates the upper world from the lower world. "Life" indicates the connection of a being to its source" (Ramchal). A weakening of the partition that separates the lower world from its root is the essence of the ritual of Para Aduma. It tells us that one who is tamei can renew the tie and connection to the source of life. The goal of this procedure is to strengthen the connection between these two worlds.

This process is hinted to in the verses that follow, that talk about the actual laws that relate to the purifying of one who is T'MEI MEIT. A person who comes into contact with death is, apparently, influenced by this separation of the body from the soul, of the separation from the upper world. The purification process is

meant to create a new connection between the body and the soul. In this process, the Torah says: They shall take for the impure person some of the ashes (earth) of the burning of the animal and put upon it spring water in a vessel (19:17). The word used for 'ashes' is not EIFER with an ALEF but AFAR with an AYIN. (While EIFER means ashes, AFAR means earth, dust.) But what is actually left from the burning of the Para Aduma? EIFER HAPARA - ashes. AFAR is something from which things can grow, which can take a form. EIFER is what is left from fire. It can take no form; it is truly the end. And yet, here the Torah tells us to take of the AFAR of the Para.

It's interesting to note that when Avraham is bargaining with HaShem to save S'dom and its environs, he uses these very words to belittle himself in daring to ask favors from HaShem: V'ANOCHI AFAR VA'EIFER (Vayeira 18:27). The Netziv explains Avraham's statement: Avraham compares himself to AFAR which connotes a future, progeny to carry on with his mission, which, at that point in time, he didn't have. And a z'chut avot, of EIFER, the end product of previous generations which he also didn't have.

This change in the usage of the words tells us that what was once over, EIFER, and considered the end, is now AFAR, considered a possible beginning. The purifying power of the Para Aduma converts the EIFER into AFAR. Exactly what is it that causes this to happen. The

process isn't completed with the burning of the Para Aduma, nor with the collection of its ashes. It only takes affect when mixed with MAYIM CHAYIM and then paced into a K'LI. The S'fat Emet (Sh'mot, Parshat Para), tells us This is the root of all mitzvot: to glue the body to the life of the soul, for the body becomes a utensil for the soul through the mitzvot; the body becomes a vessel through the mitzvot. The body is the K'LI and the MAYIM CHAYIM are the Torah and mitzvot.

If I am correct about the power that this MAYIM CHAYIM has, then maybe, it is no coincidence that this parsha deals so much with matters of water: Miriam's death and the subsequent lack of her water; Mei Meriva; the next complaint about water, concluding with the song of the well, ALI BE'ER. The Or HaChayim strengthens this possibility when he observes that this 'song' to the well is actually a song to Torah for, as we know, Torah is compared to water.

I admit to drawing no conclusions from all of this, other than to pay more attention to the words of my davening and to try to imagine the effect my performance of any mitzva might have upon the running of this world and the behavior in the world above. And maybe there is more meaning for me in AVINU MALKEINU, Z'CHOR KI AFAR ANACHNU. Merciful Father, remember, we are not EIFER, it is not over; we are AFAR - there is more to us - we can improve and we can grow. Let us. ❀

Insights into Halacha

- Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Ohr Somayach (yspitz@ohr.edu)

(PhiloTorah editor's notes in green)

The Lox & Cream Cheese Dilemma

The next time you are at a brit, as you are about to smear a nice dollop of cream cheese on your bagel and add the lox (obviously not at the fleishig britot that are ubiquitous here in Eretz Yisrael, and rightly so), look around and see if others are doing the same. You might just find that certain people (probably Sefardic or Chassidish) will refrain from doing so. Aside from those who are allergic to or can't stand fish, there is a large portion of observant Jewry who will not eat a fish and milk combination.

“Hold your horses!” one might exclaim. “I’ve never seen any mention of this in my Chumash, or even Shulchan Aruch! Not only that, The Shulchan Aruch says that the exact converse is true - that one may cook together milk and fish, for there is no issur involved, even d’rabbanan! Is this a new chumra of the week? And how exactly am I expected to go to a brit and not have bagels with lox and cream cheese? It just wouldn’t seem Jewish!”

Actually, although this is not a new chumra, he would be correct, as there is no mention of such a halacha in the Shulchan Aruch at all. But, to better

understand where such a shita comes from, first one must understand the halachos of mixing fish and meat.

The Shulchan Aruch writes that one must be careful not to eat meat and fish together, for this mixture may cause tzara'at. It is generally accepted that this prohibition includes chicken, turkey, and all other fowl as well.

This is also the reason why in between a meat and fish course, for example on Shabbat, after the gefilte fish, we rinse our mouths (or drink a l'chaim) and eat something - KINUACH V'HADACHA. Sefardic custom is to also wash hands in between. Some maintain it is preferable to have the fish course (usually the appetizer) before the meat course as well.

All this, just to maintain a separation between the two, and to make sure that at the time of eating one, there should not remain even a trace or residue of the other, due to the Talmudic dictum CHAMIRA SAKANTA MEI-ISURA. This means that something that involves a severe health risk is considered more stringent than regular prohibitions. A good example of this involves the halacha of bitul (nullification). In a normal scenario where one encounters something non-kosher which might have accidentally fallen into a kosher mixture, the halacha, in most cases, maintains that if there is present 60 times the amount kosher against the non-kosher, the non-kosher product is considered

nullified, and one is permitted to partake of the mixture. However, in a case of a severe health risk, halachically there is no nullification, as halacha is extremely cautious when it comes to people's health.

However, our situation may not be the standard one, for some opine that there are plenty of people in the world who do mix meat and fish, and there has not been any recent news of disease outbreaks!

The Magen Avraham actually addresses this and advances the notion that the teva (roughly translated as environmental conditions) has since changed, and therefore one does not have worry about this. Other notable authorities, including the Aruch HaShulchan and the Mishna Berura seem to accept his argument as halacha. Furthermore, there is no mention of this danger of eating meat and fish together in any of the works of the Rambam, the best known Jewish doctor.

However, most halachic authorities do not agree with this chiddush and maintain that the basic halacha follows the Shulchan Aruch and that this mixture remains forbidden.

Yet, many authorities do take the lenient opinion into consideration to allow for some leniency in certain questionable situations. They therefore maintain that nullification is applicable here, as it is not considered a true case of sakana. In

fact, the OU designates certain Worcestershire and steak sauces with an OU Fish designation, denoting that the fish content within is not nullified, and one may not serve it on meat. If it contains 60 times the fish content, they assume it to be nullified and do not designate it as OU Fish.

The bottom line is that if meat and fish would not be actually cooked together in the same pot, the majority of halachic decisors would permit it to be eaten. In fact, one may cook fish in a meat pot, as long as no actual meat remains in the pot. The same would apply to cooking fish in a meaty oven.

“That’s all fine and dandy”, one might exclaim, “but what does that have to do with mixing fish and milk?”

The answer to this lies in the Beit Yosef, The Shulchan Aruch’s commentary on the Tur, for in Yorah De’ah 87:3 (s.v. dagim), the Beit Yosef writes that "one should not eat fish and milk together because of the danger involved, as it is explained in O.C. 173." A number of poskim follow this ruling, and likewise maintain that one should not eat a combination of milk and fish, based on the reasoning of the Beit Yosef.

However, many authorities point out that the location the Beit Yosef referenced for his halachic decision to be machmir is referring to eating fish with meat, not milk. They therefore maintain that this issue is a case of

mistaken identity (misprint) and that eating fish with milk is 100% permissible. Some add that if the Beit Yosef truly intended to rule stringently in this matter, he would not have mentioned it only in his commentary, but rather would have written it as official psak halacha in the Shulchan Aruch.

On the other hand, many authorities hold that there still is a sakana involved in eating fish and milk, but it’s not a halachic issue, rather a medical one. They maintain that since both fish and milk serve to cool down the human body, when they are ingested together it can cause bodily harm. This, they hold, is the reason the Beit Yosef intended in saying not to eat them together, and not because of a disease.

While these poskim do cite this logic and say one should therefore refrain, many decisors, most notably the Chatam Sofer, argue that this can not possibly be true, for we see many people eating them together and not becoming (noticeably) sick. (Anchovies on pizza, anyone? Actually, the thought of that makes me sick.) Also, the greatest (and best known) Jewish doctor, the Rambam, makes absolutely no mention of this danger.

Still, others maintain that this depends on the time and place. Just because someone won’t get sick from it in New York, there is no assurance that the same would be true in Kabul. (Although I am assuming that if one is in Kabul, he

has other sakanot to worry about...)

The bottom line is that different minhagim developed over time among different segments of Jewry. An oversimplified generalization is that Sefardim (since they follow the psakim of the Beit Yosef) should be machmir and Ashkenazim can be meikil. But there are Sefardi poskim who rule that a Sefardi can be lenient (some hold only b'dieved and others hold even l'chatchila), and there are Ashkenazi poskim who hold that even an Ashkenazi should be machmir. An interesting side point is that most of the authorities who are machmir when it comes to mixing fish with milk and/or cheese are nevertheless lenient when it comes to mixing fish with butter. This heter of butter also includes "shmetinin", the layer of fat skimmed off of the top of milk.

However, it should be noted that the Ben Ish Chai disagrees and is machmir concerning butter as well. Interestingly, his rebbe and Chief Rabbi of Baghdad before him, the Zivchei Tzedek, wrote that his disciple's stance is too machmir, and that one may at least be lenient with butter and fish. Of course, there is also the majority opinion that the whole issue is a non-starter and there is no problem whatsoever, even with a tuna melt.

So, back at that brit, even if you decide not to take a bite of your Bagels and Lox Deluxe, at least you now have some food for thought.

Rabbi Spitz's footnotes are very extensive. The ones I decide to include are few among the many. If you want more than this PhiloTorah column provides, click on the website, find the topic and do some more reading.

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomot / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the **Sho'el U'Meishiv** and **Rosh Chavura** of the **Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel** at **Yeshivas Ohr Somayach** in **Yerushalayim**. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled **"Insights Into Halacha"**.

ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/ Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere.

PhiloTorah editor's note: I remember reading that the S'fardic p'sak against fish and milk was based on a misread of the word CHET-LAMED-BET. The word can be read as CHEILEV (meat fat) or CHALAV (milk). The ban on fish and milk was based on the reading of not cooking fish in CHEILEV (fish & meat), as not cooking fish in CHALAV (milk). If I remember correctly, Rav Ovadya Yosef said that even though the ban on fish and milk was based on a misreading of the word, those Eidot who follow the ban, should continue to do so.

CHUKAT

Check out the whole GMS file for other GMs from this sedra. Don't just look at the CHUKAT pages; search for the sedra name, which might show up elsewhere.

GM Bamidbar 21:8 (in Chukat) -

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לָךְ
שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־נֹס וְהָיָה
כָּל־הַנִּשְׁחָף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וְחָיָה:

HaShem said to Moshe, "Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole, and let whoever is bitten look at it and live."

The Mishna in Rosh HaShana 3:8 -

...Similarly, you can say: The verse states: "Make for yourself a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he sees it, he shall live" (Bamidbar 21:8). Once again it may be asked: 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, but if not, they rotted from their snakebites.

That's the Mishna's question and explanation.

Here's a Gimatriya Match to echo that Mishna on the pasuk in question:

The gimatriya of our pasuk in Chukat is 3737. Its NISTAR gimatriya is 3143, which is the regular gimatriya of D'varim 13:12 in Parshat R'ei -

וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִרְאוּ וְלֹא־יִסְפוּ
לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדָבָר הָרָע הַזֶּה בְּקִרְבָּךְ:

And all Israel shall listen and fear, and they shall no longer do any evil such as this in your midst.

This pasuk is "hidden" in the pasuk about the fiery serpent on a pole. It states very clearly the only way to correct the errors of one's behavior - call it T'SHUVA!

GM As Parshat Chukat ends, Bnei Yisrael find themselves in Arvot Moav, on the east side of the Jordan River. This is the threshold of Eretz Yisrael. Although there are four sedras remaining in the Book of Bamidbar and another eleven sedras in the Book of D'varim, the people have already arrived at their final encampment, set to cross the Jordan and conquer the Land. Bamidbar 22:1, the final pasuk of Chukat -

וַיִּסְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנּוּ בְּעַרְבֹת
מוֹאָב מֵעַבְרַת דְּיַרְדֵּן יְרִיחוֹ:

The children of Israel journeyed and encamped in the plains of Moav, across the Jordan from Yericho.

The Meraglim had so scared the people into expressing their intention to refuse going into the Land, but rather to either remain in the Midbar (as the Meraglim themselves seemed to want) or return to

Egypt (as the panicked people were demanding).

On the other hand, the successful battles against Sichon and Og were intended to encourage the people to face the battles to come.

The gimatriya of this last pasuk of Chukat is 2394. Among seven other p'sukim in Tanach with the same gimatriya, is one from T'hilim (specifically 3:7) that contains an important message to the generation that is preparing to enter Eretz Yisrael and fight against the nations there. David HaMelech said this when faced with rebellion led by his own son. But it is a message for all generations...

לֹא-אֵירָא מֵרִבְבוֹת עַם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב
שִׁתּוֹ עָלַי:

*I will not fear ten thousands of people,
who have set themselves against me all
around.*

RED ALERT!

Chukat

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

DIVREI TORAH

- The opening chapter of Chukat gives us the perplexing law of the Red Cow. This law is the epitome of the Hebrew term CHOK, an incomprehensible Torah Halacha. My wife and I once spent a

Shabbat in Rehovot, Israel, and we ate dinner Friday night at the house of HaRav Simcha HaKohen Kook, 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 mitzva 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 may 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.

- For the past several decades there has been a serious effort to develop a Red Cow. As recently as 2022, five candidates were exported to Israel from America as possibly being a Halachically acceptable Red Cow. The real problem will arise when they succeed in developing one. The world's leading rabbis will weigh in on the question. Is it really a kosher Red Cow? And then what will we do with it now?

It would really be a shame if this effort will result in a major Halachic disagree-

ment, but we can see it happen this way. And there is a time limit on the discussion, because the Cow will quickly become ineligible when it reaches a relatively young age.

- 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 Halacha 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 Shmshon 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 paragraph one quoted 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. 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. Why is the law of the Red Cow so perplexing? (19:9,10)
2. For how long did the Kohen who prepared the Red Cow remain impure? (19:8)
3. Which two Jewish people died in this Parsha? (Ch. 20)
4. How many times did Moshe hit the rock to bring forth water? (20:11)
5. What countries did Sichon and Og rule when they went to war against Bnei Yisrael? (21:21 and :33)

From Rashi

6. Which Kohen was the one who prepared the Red Cow? (19:3)
7. The ashes of the Red Cow were divided into three parts. Where were they kept? (19:9)
8. How do we derive the idea that the source of water (from a well) in the desert was in the merit of Miriam? (20:2)
9. Who was the Mal'ach (messenger) sent by Hashem to liberate Bnei Yisrael in Egypt? (20:16)
10. Who was the captive that Bnei Yisrael

lost in the battle with the Canaanites of Arad? (21:1)

From the Rabbis

11. How many years passed between chapter 19 and chapter 20?

12. According to the Malbim who really suffered from the sin of the rock?

13. In the Talmud (Rosh HaShana 3a) our Sages state that the well was supplied by Hashem in the merit of Miriam. What stopped as a result of Aharon's death?

From the Midrash

14. Yazeir was a city close to Sichon's kingdom. Who conquered it on behalf of Israel?

From the Haftara (Sho-f'tim)

15. Why did Gilad's sons expel Yiftach from their house?

Relationships

a) Miriam - Aharon

b) Elazar - Nachshon

c) Moav - Lot

d) Avraham - Ammon

e) Gilad - Menashe

ANSWERS

1. The impure person became pure, but the Kohen who helped him become pure became impure.

2. Until the end of the day.

3. Miriam and Aharon.

4. Twice

5. Sichon: Amori. Og: Bashan

6. The vice Kohen Gadol. In this case, Elazar.

7. One was stored on Mt. Olives for future use. A second portion was divided among the 24 divisions of Kohanim for purifying people. A third part was stored for safe keeping next to the wall of the Courtyard.

8. Because right after Miriam's death, there was a lack of water for the people.

9. Moshe was the messenger.

10. A non-Jewish maid servant.

11. About 38 years.

12. Bnei Yisrael suffered the most by losing Moshe as their leader.

13. The pillar of cloud that led them and protected them in the desert.

14. The spies that Moshe sent there.

15. Because Yiftach was from a different mother.

Relations

a) Sister & brother

b) Uncle & nephew

c) Son & father

d) Great Uncle & great nephew

e) Grandson & grandfather

PhiloTorah This 'n That

WED, 4 Tamuz, July 10th - I have reversed the direction of the entries - most recent is now first; oldest is last.

Furthermore, I have redone the links so that you can get the most recent entry only - or - the whole file.

TUE, 3 Tamuz, July 9th - You might have noticed a Z"L after the names of three contributing columnists to PhiloTorah. Rabbi Sacks, Rabbi Apple, and - most recently - Rabbi Sprecher. I am honored to include their words of Torah on the website, as tributes to their memories. It should not go without saying that when one's words of Torah continue beyond one's lifetime, then they can be viewed as still being alive.

Just for your information, some columns are submitted by their authors weekly; others are taken from archives on the internet - in all cases, with permission.

The picture on the top (front) page is often - but not always - from the beautiful art of Yehoshua Wiseman. This week's picture is one of my favorites - I hope you like it as much as I do. In addition, there are two links - one for the current sedra and one for the previous sedra - to other pictures of Yehoshua's.

WED, 20 Sivan, June 26th

Once upon a time, a long time ago...

32 years ago, to be specific, June '92, the then director of the Israel Center

was Shai Solomon. I was his associate director and educational director. At the time, our activities were listed weekly in the Jerusalem Post or the In Jerusalem. Shai ask me to print up a weekly schedule of activities to be distributed in shuls with English speakers, some of whom don't read the Post. I didn't like the idea of giving out a weekday schedule in shul on Shabbat, so I suggested putting a D'var Torah on one side of a sheet of paper with the schedule on the other side. "Go for it", was Shai's reply.

[We had previously used the name Torah Tidbits on a few weekly Divrei Torah that shared a shelf at 10 Straus with flyers for our activities. They were not distributed, just picked up at the old Israel Center building (which was formerly, the San Remo Hotel), our first home. We also packed Torah Tidbits to Go with lunchboxes for Nitzotz kids in Gush Katif for Project Nissan. That small 4-pager contained divrei Torah on the Hagada.]

We made 60 two-sided A4 photocopies of the new Torah Tidbits. 30 went to our shul in Ramot Eshkol and 30 went to Shai's father's shul in Nayot.

The left side of the front of the first TT dealt with the details and stats of Israel and Chutz LaAretz getting out of sync with Parshat HaShavua, as happened that year.

On the flip side, as we called it, we had upcoming events at the Center.

The main part of the front page was a d'var Torah from Maayana shel Torah.

Here is the gist of the first Torah Tidbit:

The ARI Z"l says that the mitzva of BIKURIM is a TIKUN for the sin of the spies. BIKURIM is not just one of the many Mitzvot HaT'luyot BaAretz, the mitzvot that are connected and dependent upon the Land of Israel - it is the perfect counterpoint to the devastating sin that we read about in Parshat Sh'lach. The Meraglim took fruits from the Land - the Bikurim bringer takes fruits from the Land. The Meraglim opened their mouths and poisoned a generation against going into Eretz Yisrael with their scare-tactics and negative comments. The Bikurim-bringer opens his mouth in thanks and praise to HaShem for His having brought us to this place. The Meraglim said, "It's a beautiful country but we don't want to live there; we won't survive there. The Bikurim-bringer is thrilled and delighted to have actualized the purpose of our existence as a Nation and as Jews. He recites about our ancestors going down into Egypt, what happened there, how G-d took us out, and how He brought us to Eretz Yisrael.

G-d says that He is taking us out of Egypt in order to give us the Torah and bring us to the place He promised to the Avot and to us. The Meraglim said - no! The Bikurim-bringer says, YES!

Rav Menachem Zamba HY"D (of the

Warsaw ghetto) beautifully points out that the three fruits that the Meraglim brought back with them - grapes, figs, and pomegranates are exactly the three fruits that the Mishna (Bikurim 3:1) uses as examples for Bikurim - driving home the point that Bikurim is a kapara for Cheit HaMeraglim.

Torah Tidbits has continued since Parshat Eikev of 5780 (2020), without my input. Since then, a new website, in the style of ttidbits.com (which was discontinued by OU Israel Center) has been appearing on the internet weekly, with many features - including some that were dropped from Torah Tidbits.

That website is the one you are reading from - PhiloTorah.

MON, 18 Sivan, June 24th Thanks to a suggestion by Ellis Cohen, I now can update the website whenever something new is added or changed. It requires clicking on CLEAR CACHE, not on my browser but on my page at GoDaddy, the host of philotorah.co

THU, 14 Sivan, June 20th - To keep readers of PhiloTorah in the loop. For the past two weeks, I have been experiencing a problem with updating the website. It is not a fatal problem, just a bit crippling. GoDaddy, the company from which I bought the domain philotorah.co - and their cPanel (I don't know what to call it) which hosts (is that the right word) the website, had made a change, which they called migration of the

website. That's when the problem started. I estimate that I have spent a solid 10-12 hours on the phone and chats with tech people, and have gotten nowhere in solving the problem.

Basically, it's like this:

I have a file manager on cPanel to which I upload all the files for the website. I also have an index.html file to which I make changes in order to update the website to show the new files. The final step of the process of taking an edited article from my DavkaWriter file and it being accessible on PhiloTorah is to refresh the website to reflect the changes made to the index.html file. This works only sometimes. But not always. It comes and goes.

Which is weird because a computer problem should result in something not working at all. Whether this final step - which I always implemented multiple times every day, works or not, seems to be a matter of time.

After several hours of not trying to refresh the webpage, a new attempt will succeed. After that, it repeatedly fails, until leaving it alone for a number of hours, when it will then work as it is supposed to.

Don't know if this was of interest to anyone else, but that's the story.

The problem has not stopped the website from working - it just slows things down from my end.

THU, 15 Iyar, May 23rd - On the occasion of PhiloTorah #200, I decided to begin a feature that I will add to from time to time. Each entry will be dated, so that if you come back to this file, you will be able to find your place and skip over that which you have already read.

PhiloTorah is the successor to the website I maintained over many years - Ttidbits.com - which paralleled the printed version of Torah Tidbits.

Back in June of 1992, the then director of the OU/NCSY Israel Center (that's what it was called back then), Shai Solomon, asked me to print up a schedule of activities of the Center to be distributed in shuls with English-speakers. The idea did not sit well with me for about five minutes. Then I had an idea. How about the schedule of Center activities on one side of a sheet of paper and a D'var Torah on the other? Shai went for the idea, and Torah Tidbits was born.

Actually, it was reborn in a new form. Its real beginning was back in 1971, when I used the term Torah Tidbits to describe short Divrei Torah and Halachic review points, which I presented at NCSY Shabbatonim. At the time, I sensed that a minute to a minute and a half 'tidbit' would go over better than a 20 minute D'var Torah. Torah Tidbits began in an oral form.

Back to the early '90s. before the first issue of TT in June of '92 for Parshat

Sh'lach, there were two other Torah pages that carried the name Torah Tidbits.

When the Israel Center was at 10 Straus, there were two long tilted shelves near the entrance on which we placed flyers for the many activities taking place at the Center. People would come, peruse the dozen of so flyers and take copies of what interested them.

I came up with the idea of having a one page D'var Torah available to be taken along with the flyers. That page was named Torah Tidbits.

So too, we had a project headquartered at the Center called NITZOTZ. It was geared to English-speaking students at yeshivot, seminaries, and university, to offer volunteering and chesed opportunities to supplement and enrich their year (or more) in Israel. One of the Nitzotz projects was TOCHNIT NISAN. Kids who were staying in Israel over the Pesach-time break in their studies would go with us to Gush Katif for a work-study-enjoy program. David Katz, the director of Nitzotz (now longtime director of MMY) asked me for a printed D'var Torah to be put in the lunch boxes each day, to supplement the sandwich, fruit, and piece of cake contained therein. Torah Tidbits to Go was an A4 sheet of paper folded twice into a small A6 sized 4-pager.

These were the first three forms of Torah Tidbits.

Which brings the story back to June '92.

First two weeks, TT was a single sheet of A4 paper printed on both sides. 60 copies were made and distributed 30 copies in each of two shuls - Beth Jacob in Ramot Eshkol and a shul in Nayot.

From there, things took off. Calls like: I was at my brother-in-law's for Shabbat and I saw Torah Tidbits; do you think I can get some for my shul?

The format and the number of copies and the number of shuls and other locations that received TT grew and grew and grew.

Personally, I started TT, edited it for 28 years, until my retirement in September of 2019. I continued to contribute to TT to help things along for about an additional seven months and then I was asked to stop, to allow the new editor to spread his wings (as the saying goes).

On the day that I ended my involvement with Torah Tidbits (having become its Editor Emeritus), I acquired the website that went through a couple of name changes and soon became philotorah.co - which means 'Lover of Torah' (which I am and which I hope my readers are).

PhiloTorah is website only - no printed version (except what individual readers decide to print up for themselves, their families, or their shuls).

Sometime ago, I put a counter on the website which counts unique visitors. It stands at this moment at 11,600. (Someone who accesses the site many times is only counted once.) Torah

Tidbits had always been a labor of love for me, as is PhiloTorah. Part of loving Torah is sharing it with others.

I think that's it for now. More to come - IYH/BN.