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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE RIGHT CLUB

“Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice.” (20:11)

If you’ve ever played golf, you’ll know how important it is to choose the right club. By ‘club,’ I don’t mean what sort of society to mix in; rather the tool of preference to move the ball from the tee to the hole most accurately and efficiently.

If you’re on the fairway, you probably need a wooden club. If you use an iron club, you’ll be wasting your energy, because the power of your swing will not connect with the ball to its maximum efficiency.

On the other hand if you are in a sand trap, you’ll need a heavily angled iron to chip the ball back onto the grass fairway. If you use a wood, it will be next to useless. It all depends on using the right tool for the job.

A Jew’s ‘club’ is his voice. So much of what we do, we do with our voices: Prayer, Torah study, blessings.

As Yitzchak said when he felt Yaakov’s arms covered with goatskins, **“The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Esav.” (Bereishis 26:22)**

The Voice is given to Yaakov. And the Hands, to Esav. The internal power which emanates from the heart — that’s the Voice, the external power of action. The Hand is the domain of Esav.

In our times, it is Esav who sends men to the moon, who builds cities of glass and steel that scrape the sky, who plumbs the depths of the ocean trenches. Esav knows how to use his hands. And while Yaakov can also vie with Esav in these fields, when he does, he’s really not playing with his ideal ‘club.’

When Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it, he was sending out a message which contradicted the fundamental essence of the Jewish People. It was as if he was saying: “The voice isn’t adequate. You need to use Esav’s skills, Esav’s hands.”

The power of the Jewish People is not in its arms. It is in its voice.

The voice lifted up in prayer. The voice

of concern and brotherhood. The voice of Torah ringing from the halls of study.

That’s the only ‘club’ of which we need to be members.

A WING AND A PRAYER

“This is the decree (chok) of the Torah...” (19:2)

The mitzvah of the Parah Adumah (red heifer) is the quintessential ‘chok’ or decree which defies human understanding.

The world is like a 747. No pilot would dream of getting behind the control col-

umn of concern and brotherhood. A pilot does not have to know *why* his plane flies through the sky. But he has to know *how* to fly the plane. The fact that he cannot explain *why* the air passing under the wings should cause the plane to fly in no way detracts from his diligence as he sits on top of two tons of metal hurtling down the runway at over 100 mph. At that moment he’s not the slightest bit concerned that he doesn’t understand how flight works. He knows that unless he performs flawlessly, *this flight will certainly not work!*

THE LAST OF THE KIDDUSH WINE

“...pure red heifer” (19:2)

It’s difficult for us to imagine, but not so long ago, there were ordinary-looking people who displayed extraordinary powers.

There are literally hundreds of stories of Jews in the Second World War who risked and surrendered their lives, rather than transgress the smallest commandment of the Torah. One of these holy souls was Rabbi Shmuel David Ungar, the spiritual leader of Nitra. Rabbi Ungar had a reputation as a holy person and a great teacher that reached far beyond his native Slovakia.

In early 1944, Rabbi Ungar fled to the woods around Nitra to escape deportation by the Fascists. Even though he faced acute hunger, he refused to make the smallest compromise in his observance of Jewish Law.

As the weeks went by, he became weaker and weaker. A friend managed to find some grapes (Heaven only knows from where) and begged him to eat them. He replied “How can I eat them now? If I use them now, I won’t have wine to make Kiddush on Friday night. Should a Jew enjoy grapes if he has no wine to sanctify the next Shabbos?”

When winter came, his health started to fail. Nevertheless, he still spent hours learning Torah at the mouth of his bunker, despite the heavy snow and the bitter cold. Suffering from starvation and exposure,

“...the Jewish People are prepared to give up an equal fortune for a mitzvah that is infinitely beyond the grasp of human logic, merely because it is the Will of Hashem.”

umn of a 747 until he knows how to fly his craft in all kinds of weather and under all conditions. He has to know how to take off, to land, to trim the ailerons. He has to know what every button and switch in front of him can and cannot do. He has to be a professional. The lives of 500 people are hanging on his judgment and experience.

In much the same way, every Jew is a ‘pilot.’ We have to know how to fly the 747 of life. Every *halacha* is like a switch in that 747 cockpit, and only with the guidance of the Torah can we navigate life’s airways without nose-diving into the sea.

We can never understand the depth of a mitzvah, for a mitzvah is an expression of the Will of the Creator, and transcends the knowledge of His creations. But we know that the *mitzvos* are the control panel to the spiritual world.

We can never know how a mitzvah works, but this mustn’t interfere with our

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the *Parah Adumah* — the red heifer — are detailed. These laws of ritual purification are to be used when someone has come into contact with death. After the nation “wanders” for nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam passes away and is buried at *Kadesh*. The people complain about the loss of their water supply which until then has been provided for them miraculously in the merit of Miriam’s right-

eousness. Aaron and Moshe pray for the people’s welfare. Hashem commands them to gather the nation at *Merivah*, and speak to a designated rock so that

water will flow forth from it. Distressed by the people’s lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of Hashem’s power over the world which would have resulted if the rock had produced water as a result of him only speaking to it. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aaron that they will not bring the people into the Land. The *Bnei Yisrael* resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of *Eisav*, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to *Eretz Yisrael*. When they reach *Mt. Hor*, Aaron passes from this world and his son *Elazar* is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aaron was beloved by all the people, and they observe a national mourning period of 30 days. The *Bnei Yisrael* battle *Sichon* the Amorite, who fights against them rather than allow them to pass through his land. As a result, *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the lands that *Sichon* had previously seized from the *Amonites* on the east bank of the *Jordan River*.

Dedicate an issue of
OHRNET

*in memory of a beloved one
or in honor of a simcha*

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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by
OHR SOMAYACH
TANENBAUM COLLEGE
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

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Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications
Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro, Director

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PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529

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FATHERLY ADVICE

*Tidbits From the ‘Ethics of the Fathers’
Traditionally Studied on Summer Sabbaths*

LET YOUR HOME BE A GATHERING PLACE FOR THE SAGES.

• *Rabbi Yossi ben Yoezer, Avos 1:4*

DO NOT ATTACH YOURSELF TO A WICKED MAN.

• *Nitai HaArbeli, Avos 1:7*

The impact of environment is the common denominator of these two bits of fatherly advice. When sages seek a place to confer make your home available to them for it is inevitable that you will pick up some wisdom from them just as it is inevitable that one who enters

a spice shop must carry out some fragrance with him even if he makes no purchase. In similar fashion we must avoid the company of the wicked even if we do not behave like them, because one who enters a tannery will carry out an unpleasant odor even if he makes no purchase.

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF
REB GEDALIAH DOVID BEN ISSER HENRY, OBM
OF MANCHESTER, ENGLAND
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS YAHRZEIT - 7 TAMMUZ
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. “Take a perfect *Parah Adumah* (red heifer) which has no blemish...” What does the word ‘perfect’ (*temima*) mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a valid *Parah Adumah*?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) Sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the *Parah Adumah*; b) Touches the water; c) Carries the water?
5. Why was the *mitzvah* of the *Parah Adumah* entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aaron?
6. Why does the Torah stress that *all* of the congregation came to *Midbar Tzin*?
7. Why is Miriam’s death taught after the section of the *Parah Adumah*?
8. During their journey in the *midbar*, through who’s merit did the Jewish People receive water?
9. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time?
10. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Jewish People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?
11. The cloud that led the Jewish People in the *midbar* leveled all the mountains that were in their path except for three. Which three and why?
12. Why did the *entire* congregation mourn the death of Aaron?
13. What disappeared when Aaron died?
14. Who was “the inhabitant of the South” (21:1) that attacked the Jewish People?
15. For what two reasons did Hashem punish the people with snakes specifically?
16. Why did the Jewish People camp in Arnon, rather than pass through Moav to enter *Eretz Canaan*?
17. What miracle took place at the valley of Arnon?
18. What was the “strength” of Amon that prevented the Jewish People from entering into their land?
19. Why was Moshe afraid of Og?
20. Who killed Og?

BONUS QUESTION?

“...Give water to the people and to their animals.” (20:8) The Talmud states that it is forbidden to eat before feeding your animals. As for drinking, the *Magen Avraham* rules that you may drink before giving water to your animals. As a support for this, the *Magen Avraham* cites the example of Rivka, who said to Eliezer, “Drink, and (afterwards) I will give water to your camels, too.” Why doesn’t the *Magen Avraham* cite as support the verse from this week’s *Parsha*, in which Hashem tells Moshe to “give water to the people” and only afterwards “and to their animals”?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“Speak to the rock...” (20:8) Hashem told Moshe to ‘teach’ the rock a single chapter of the Mishna. When the rock would thus give forth water, this would impress upon the Jewish People the awesome power and importance of Torah study.

• *Yalkut Shimoni as explained by Rabbi Shmuel Faivelson, shlita*

HAFTORAH: SHOFTIM 11:1-33

THE HISTORIAN

An essential component of wisdom is the knowledge that man’s failure to comprehend truth does not make it untrue.

If someone asked us why we eat, we would answer that we must eat in order to live. If we were questioned further as to why we eat bread and not stones, we would answer that stones don’t contain the necessary nutrients to sustain life. However, *why* humans need these nutrients, and *why* we can’t extract them from stones — *that* we would not be able to explain, for that only Hashem knows. The fact that we don’t understand these processes does not in any way mitigate their manifest truth.

Even though we eat to stay alive, Hashem created the world in such a way that our food also has a pleasing taste and aroma. But that taste should never be confused with

our reason for eating.

Mitzvos are spiritual food for the neshama (soul).

Hashem wanted the *mitzvos* to be palatable, so He infused them with taste — ideas and lessons — that we can understand. However, we should never confuse the taste of a *mitzvah* with its real reason, just as we should never eat merely to satisfy our taste buds. For *why* or *how* a particular *mitzvah* sustains our soul, we cannot know, anymore than we know why a particular protein sustains our body.

In this week’s *Parsha*, Man is left unable to comprehend the law of the *Parah Adumah*, the workings of the spiritual world. So too are the workings of history mysterious to all except He who writes history. Thus, the *Haftorah* depicts the ahistorical rise of Yiftach to the position of chief despite his lowly beginning in life.

• *Rabbi Zev Leff, Rabbi Mendel Hirsch*

WEEKLY DAF

TAMID 26 -32

RACES AND LOTTERIES

The first sacred service performed daily in the *Beis Hamikdash* was the ceremonial removal of some of the ashes from the altar by a single *kohen*. The first Mishnah in *Mesechta Tamid*, which deals with the regular system of service, informs us that any *kohen* who was interested in performing this service would purify himself by immersion in a mikveh before the arrival of the *kohen* in charge of delegating duties. When he arrived he would announce that anyone who had already immersed himself in anticipation of the privilege to perform this first service should come forward and participate in a lottery to choose the privileged one from amongst all who were candidates.

Conflicting signals seem to emerge from this Mishnah. The initial indication is that no lottery was used to determine who would perform the service, because if a lottery would decide the matter why should an interested *kohen* bother with immersion before he even knew whether he would be chosen. The concluding words of the Mishnah, however, indicate that a lottery was definitely required.

Two resolutions are proposed. The Sage Rava explains that even though each *kohen* who immersed himself realized he might lose out in the lottery, he did so in order to be immediately ready to perform the service if he indeed was privileged to be chosen. But the Sage Abaye offers a different approach based on a Mishnah in *Mesechta Yoma* (22a) which describes two stages in the selection process. At first, if more than one *kohen* applied for this service they were told to race up the ramp leading to the altar and whoever reached the top four cubits of this ramp first would win this privilege. It once happened that

two *kohanim* were running neck and neck and one caused the other to fall from the ramp and break his leg. When the Sages saw that this method was dangerous they decreed to eliminate the race and to decide only by a lottery which heretofore had been employed only when two *kohanim* reached the finish line together. The first part of our Mishnah, therefore, refers to the first stage of selection when the lottery was not the deciding factor and each *kohen* who felt he could outrun his colleagues would immerse himself in preparation. The concluding part refers to the later stage when everything depended on the lottery.

Why was the race considered proper at one stage and later abandoned? It has been suggested that in the earlier years when *kohanim* were on a higher spiritual level the enthusiasm of each *kohen* to perform the service for the sake of Heaven would motivate him to run as fast as possible but would not make him so envious of another *kohen* getting the job that he could cause him to become injured. In later generations there were already *kohanim* who felt that what was most important was not that the service of Hashem was done but that he had the honor of doing it.

• Tamid 28a

INCENSE, RICHES AND THE SANDEK

The third lottery of the day was to determine which *kohen* would offer the incense upon the golden altar. This lottery differed from the other three in that it was restricted to those *kohanim* who had never before had the privilege of offering incense.

Why were all *kohanim* offered a chance to be selected in the lotteries for all the other services regardless of how many times they had already been privileged to perform them, and only in regard to offering incense was this opportunity restricted to those who had never done so before?

The answer is supplied in *Mesechta Yoma* (26a). The *kohen* who offered incense was rewarded by Heaven with the special role of the Tribe of Levi to which the *kohen* belonged. The *kohen* therefore insisted on everyone having an opportunity to gain this reward and would not permit one who had already offered incense to participate in a lottery when there were others who had not yet had this opportunity.

An interesting echo of this is found in our custom today in honoring someone to be a *sandek* who holds the baby when he is circumcised at a *bris milah*. In *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* (265:11) we find that it is customary for a father not to honor the same person to be a *sandek* for more than one of his children. The explanation offered by some authorities for the custom is that the role of the *sandek* is symbolically similar to that of the *kohen* offering incense, and therefore this privilege to gain riches should not be given to one who has already enjoyed it.

The Gaon of Vilna challenges this explanation. First of all, why is the custom limited to more than one child in a family and not extended to withholding this privilege from anyone who has ever been a *sandek*? Secondly, the Gaon notes that we have yet to see the *sandek* who became wealthy! The custom, he concludes, is based on a mystical reason and its source is in the Will of Rabbi Yehuda Hachasid.

• Tamid 32b

continued from page one

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Rabbi Ungar passed from this world a few weeks before the fall of the Third Reich.

The Talmud relates the story of a non-Jew, Dama ben Nesina, who possessed a precious jewel needed to replace a stone missing from the breastplate of the *Kohen Gadol*. The Sages came to him and offered him a fortune for the stone, but he would not sell it to them because the key to the safe in which the jewel was kept was under the head of his sleeping father. He would not wake his father, even for a king's ransom.

Because he was prepared to give up so much to honor his father, he was rewarded that a red heifer was born into his flock, and he sold that animal to the Sages for the same amount that he had forfeited.

Why was Dama ben Nesina rewarded specifically by a *Parah Adumah* being born into his flock?

The role of the Jewish People is to be a "Nation of priests and a holy people," singled out from the rest of the nations by their exemplary behavior. So, when Dama ben Nesina, a non-Jew, demonstrated such self-sacrifice to honor his father, it awakened an accusation in the Heavenly courts against the Jewish People. For here was a non-Jew whose devotion to the mitzvah of honoring his father was at least equal to that of the Jews, and where was the exemplary difference of the Jewish People?

Thus, the red heifer which was bought from him by the Sages demonstrated that

even though Dama ben Nesina was capable of giving up a fortune for a mitzvah that logic dictates, the Jewish People are prepared to give up an equal fortune for a mitzvah that is infinitely beyond the grasp of human logic, merely because it is the Will of Hashem.

And a holy Jew, freezing in a Slovakian winter, to whom logic says eat the grapes and worry about Shabbos later, has the power to ignore the gnawing pains of hunger in his stomach. All, so that he will not miss the chance of sanctifying the day of Shabbos and He who created it.

Sources:

- A Wing And A Prayer - Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, zatzal
- The Last Of The Kiddush Wine - Mayana shel Torah, "The Unconquerable Spirit"

ON THE TIP OF YOUR TONGUE

Aviva Jackson

<John@leebaron.demon.co.uk>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
My family went to my grandparents' house for lunch on Shabbat, and at the table I gave a d'var Torah on the portion of the week. I quoted a couple of verses off by heart, but afterwards my dad mentioned that he thought he heard somewhere that one is not supposed to quote from the Torah by heart. I am quite embarrassed about this, in case it is true and I've done the wrong thing in front of Saba [grandfather] and all his guests. Can you tell me if this is true or not, please? Thanks very much.

Dear Aviva Jackson,

In a sense, your dad is right, but there's no reason for you to be embarrassed. Here's why:

The Talmud states: "You are not allowed to say Torah verses by heart." However, we find many exceptions to this rule. For example, the Talmud relates that on Yom Kippur the *Kohen Gadol* used to say the public Torah reading by heart. Other *kohanim* also had certain verses to say during the Temple service, which they often said by heart. And it's a universal custom that we close our eyes when saying the verse, "Shema Yisrael..."

Obviously, this rule applies only

under certain conditions. The commentators offer different explanations for when it applies:

According to many authorities, the prohibition applies only when you are helping other people fulfill a halachic obligation. For example, the public Torah reading cannot be said by heart, because there is an obligation for the listeners to hear the Torah.

According to the Shulchan Aruch, the prohibition doesn't apply to a verse which is well known. So, for example, you can say by heart any verse from the daily prayers.

Other authorities maintain that there is no actual prohibition against saying verses by heart. Rather, it's preferable and it's a *mitzvah* to be strict and read the verses from a book.

One of the great pillars of halacha, Maimonides, does not even mention the prohibition of reciting verses by heart, indicating that he permits it completely. Some explain this as follows: Just as the Sages in the time of Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi lifted the ban against writing down the Oral Torah, so too, they allowed reciting the Written Torah by heart. Both steps were to safeguard the Torah and protect it from oblivion.

Ideally, you should look up the verses. But if that's difficult or a strain on your audience, you can be lenient in light of all the various opinions and leniencies, as is the general custom.

It's not always easy to memorize text. Little Johnny was having difficulty memorizing Lincoln's 'Gettysburg Address.' His teacher

scolded him, "How can it be so difficult? Why, Abraham Lincoln wrote the entire thing while riding to Gettysburg on the back of an envelope." "Wow," Johnny said, "How did such a tall man fit onto the back of an envelope?"

Sources:

- Talmud Gittin 60b
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 49
- Ibid., Mishna Berura 9
- Aruch Hashulchan 49

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

How can you have a mixture which is dairy, and when meat accidentally falls in, the mixture becomes *parve* (neither meat nor dairy)?

Answer:

Milk or meat which falls into a food is considered 'nullified' if the food contains 60 times the amount of the milk or meat. But if the food contains only 59 times the amount of milk or meat, then the milk or meat is not nullified.

Therefore, if a mixture contains a ratio of 59 parts of *parve* food and one part milk, it is dairy. If one part of meat then falls in, the meat becomes nullified because the other food is 60 times greater than it. At this point, the milk also becomes nullified because now there are also 60 units of food more than it (59 *parve* plus one of meat). Thus the entire mixture becomes *parve*.

Source:

- Yoreh De'ah 98:9

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 19:2 - Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 - Two.
3. 19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 - a) Remains *tahor*; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts *tumah*; c) He and his clothing contract *tumah*.
5. 19:22 (19:3) - Because Aaron was involved in the sin of the golden calf.
6. 20:1 - To teach that they were *all* fit to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, because anyone who was involved in the sin of the spies had already died.
7. 20:1 - To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
8. 20:2 - Miriam's.
9. 20:11 - After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to *speak* to the rock.
10. 20:17 - To the well that traveled with the nation in the *midbar*. This teaches that even if one has adequate provisions he should purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.
11. 20:22 - The mountains that were spared were *Har Sinai* for the giving of the Torah, *Har Nevo* for Moshe's burial place, and *Hor Hahar* for Aaron's burial place.
12. 20:29 - Aaron made peace between contending parties and between spouses. Thus, when he died, everybody mourned.
13. 20:29 - The *ananei hakavod* (clouds of glory) disappeared, since they sheltered the Jewish People in the merit of Aaron.
14. 21:1 - Amalek.
15. 21:6 - The original snake, who was punished for speaking evil, is fitting to punish those who spoke evil about Hashem and about Moshe. And the snake, for whom everything tastes like dust, is fitting to punish those who complained about the manna which changed to any desired taste.
16. 21:13 - Moav refused to let them pass through their land.
17. 21:15 - The Amorites concealed themselves in caves in the mountain on the Moabite side of the valley in order to ambush the Jewish People. When the Jewish People approached, the mountain on the *Eretz Canaan* side of the valley moved close to the other mountain and the Amorites were crushed between the two mountains.
18. 21:24 - Hashem's command, "Do not harass them." (*Devarim* 2:19)
19. 21:34 - Og had once been of service to Avraham. Moshe was afraid that this merit would assist Og in battle.
20. 21:35 - Moshe.

BONUS ANSWER!

It is a Torah principle that 'one should not rely on a miracle.' For example, one should not do something dangerous and say "I'm in no danger, because G-d will protect me miraculously." Being in a desert with no natural water source is life-threatening. In such a situation, a person is obligated to preserve his life at the expense of his animal's life. Therefore, the people were not allowed to give the first water to the animals, because they would then need to rely on Hashem to produce more 'miracle water' for their own self-preservation. The *Magen Avraham's* proof from Rivka, on the other hand, applies even to a situation where there is ample natural water for both people and animals.

• Meged Yosef

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

	RAMBAN				SFORNO
20:1	The Whole Congregation	21:34	Fear of Og	19:2	<i>Parah Adumah</i>
21:9	The Serpent	20:8	OHR HACHAIM The Sin of Moshe	20:26	Aaron's Special Shroud
21:21	Imperative for Peace				

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