Parsha Questions

1. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow from being a Parah Adumah (red heifer)?
2. Who is in charge of preparing the Parah Adumah?
3. Where is the sprinkling of the waters of the Parah Adumah performed?
4. Three classes of people are barred from entering the camp of the Levi'im because of tuma. Name them.
5. Some of the ashes of the Parah Adumah were kept on Har Hamishchah. For what were they used?
6. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the people and the utensils that are in the tent?
7. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water concocted from the ashes of the Parah Adumah; b) touches the “water”; c) carries the “water”?
8. Why was the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aaron?
9. Why is Miriam’s death taught after the section of the Parah Adumah?
10. During their journey in the midbar, through who’s merit did the Jewish People receive water?
11. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time?
12. 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?
13. 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?
14. Why did the entire congregation mourn the death of Aaron?
15. What disappeared when Aaron died?
16. Who was “the inhabitant of the South” (21:1) that attacked the Jewish People?
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?

I Did Not Know That!

The death of Miriam is related after the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah. Rashi, 20:1, states that just as the Parah Adumah serves to atone, so does the death of the righteous. There are many Korbanos that bring atonement. Why does the Torah choose to connect the death of Miriam specifically to the mitzvah of Parah Adumah?

“And they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel (20:29).”

From here we see that there was never a case of accidental murder in the midbar, requiring the murderer to flee to the camp of Levi. If there was someone who was in exile, then when Aaron died he would be permitted to return to his family. He wouldn’t have wept.

Meshech Chochma
Recommended Reading List

Ramban

20:1 The Whole Congregation
21:9 The Serpent
21:21 Imperative for Peace
21:34 Fear of Og

Ohr HaChaim

20:8 The Sin of Moshe

Sforno

19:2 Parah Adumah
20:26 Aaron’s Special Shroud

Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 19:2 - Two.
2. 19:3 - The Segan (assistant Kohen Gadol).
3. 19:4 - East of Jerusalem in a spot where the Segan can see the entrance of the Hechal.
4. 19:7 - A zav, a baal keri, and a metzora.
5. 19:9 - They were used by the Kohen Gadol to purify himself in order that he might prepare other Paros Adumos.
6. 19:14,15 - The people, the metal utensils, and the unsealed earthenware utensils contract tumas meis. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
7. 19:21 - a) Remains tahor; b) he, but not his clothing, contracts tumah; c) he and his clothing contract tumah.
8. 19:22 (19:3) - Because Aaron was involved in the sin of the golden calf.
9. 20:1 - To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
10. 20:2 - Miriam’s.
11. 20:11 - After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to speak to the rock.
12. 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 him.
13. 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.
14. 20:29 - Aaron made peace between contending parties including man and wife. Thus when he died, both men and women mourned.
15. 20:29 - The ananei hakavod (clouds of glory) disappeared, since they sheltered the Jewish People in the merit of Aaron.
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.

The mitzvah of the Parah Adumah brings about the greatest possible degree of atonement because it is a chok. A person who performs achok is fulfilling the highest degree of service to Hashem, because his sole motivation is to execute Hashem’s command. The Torah connects the death of Miriam to that of the Parah Adumah to teach that the death of the righteous also brings about the greatest possible degree of atonement.

Magid Yosef

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