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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

When Success Comes Knocking

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

One of my daughters is a successful architect. But it was not always that way. She spent many years honing her craft and learning by her mistakes. She said to me the other day, “Baruch Hashem, I didn’t become successful until I was ready!”

Sometimes we achieve precocious success and we’re not ready for it. And then we step up to the microphone in Carnegie Hall and show that we’re not the brilliant singer that everyone imagined we were.

Years of “paying your dues” provides us with a depth of ability which, when our big moment comes, stands us in good stead. We can go up to the mic with confidence.

Indeed, timing is important not only in our personal lives but also in the life of the Jewish People and its leaders.

Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to the rock that had previously given water, but Moshe couldn’t find it. So, he spoke to a different rock. Nothing happened. Moshe reasoned that if he couldn’t find the original rock that would yield water merely by speech, he would have to strike another rock and that would have the same effect. He was following the precedent in the Book of Exodus where indeed he had performed that miracle by striking the rock. His logic followed from the fact that Hashem had told him to bring his staff. Why else would Hashem have instructed him to bring his staff if not to strike the rock?

He struck the rock but only a trickle of water emerged. He struck it a second time and then a flood of water began to flow forth.

But that was not the way Hashem wanted the miracle to take place.

Moshe should have gone to every rock and spoken to it until he found the right one.

The right rock – at the right time.

Q & A

Questions

1. "Take a perfect Para Aduma (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" temima mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a Para Aduma?
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 Para Aduma; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the mitzvah of the Para Aduma entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?
6. Why does the Torah stress that all of the congregation came to Midbar Tzin?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of Para Aduma?
8. During their journey in the midbar, in whose 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 leveled all mountains in their path except three. Which three and why?
12. Why did the entire congregation mourn Aharon's death?
13. What disappeared when Aharon died?
14. Which "inhabitant of the South" (21:1) attacked the Jews?
15. For what two reasons did G-d 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?

Answers

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 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the Golden Calf.
6. 20:1 - To teach that they were all fit to enter the Land; everyone involved in the sin of the spies 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 one who has adequate provisions should nevertheless purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.
11. 20:22 - Har Sinai for receiving the Torah, Har Nevo for Moshe's burial, and Hor Hahar for Aharon's burial.
12. 20:29 - Aharon made peace between contending parties and between spouses. Thus, everybody mourned him.
13. 20:29 - The clouds of glory disappeared, since they sheltered the Jews in Aharon's merit.
14. 21:1 - Amalek.
15. 21:6 - The original snake, which was punished for speaking evil, is fitting to punish those who spoke evil about G-d and about Moshe. And the snake, to which 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 them passage.
17. 21:15 - The Amorites hid in caves in the mountain on the Moabite side of the valley in order to ambush the Jews. When the Jews approached, the mountain on the Eretz Canaan side of the valley moved close to the other mountain and the Amorites were crushed.
18. 21:24 - G-d'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.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Bava Batra 4-10

Like the Brightness of the Sky

"...those who love Hashem will be like the sun when it will appear in all its strength." (Shoftim 5:31)

"Those who love Hashem, explains Ravina in our *gemara*, describes the great illumination and reward that will be evident at the time of the resurrection, to those whose lives were immersed in Torah study and mitzvah fulfillment. (Rashi)

This teaching is preceded by descriptions of various – lesser, although elevated – degrees of illumination, which are enumerated in a *beraita* on our *daf*. The Tana of the *beraita* elucidates a deeper meaning of a verse in Sefer Daniel, which states:

"And the wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who bring the multitudes to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

The Tana explains:

"The wise ones shall shine like the light of the sky..."

These words refer to judges who rule wisely with true and unbiased justice, and to ones who collect and distribute charity (they are wise to know the needs of the poor – Rashi);

"...and those who bring righteousness to the many shall shine like the stars forever."

And this refers to the Torah teachers of young Jewish children (they bring righteousness to them by educating them in the path of goodness – Rashi).

Yet, brighter than the brightness of these "luminaries" are the Torah scholars who devoted themselves to the unremitting learning of Hashem's Torah.

"...those who love Hashem will be like the sun when it will appear in all its strength." (Shoftim 5:31)

It is certainly difficult to fully fathom the magnitude of these various levels of future reward taught for righteous judges, charity managers (*gaba'ei tzedaka*), teachers of Torah to children, and for loyal Torah scholars. However, we can catch a "glimpse" of the tremendous degree of their light from the words of Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel, the author of the Aramaic "Targum" (translation/interpretation) for the Books of the Prophets. He writes, regarding the words at the end of Shirat Devorah: *"Like the sun when it will appear in all its strength"* –that in the end of days, the light of the Torah scholars will be 343 times more powerful than the sun as we know it today. This indicates the tremendous glory due to true Torah scholars – their glory will be, so to speak, equal to 7 times 7 times 7 the power of the bright sunlight that we see today.

▪ *Bava Batra 8b*

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when performed by someone who understands its significance” (Meiri, Bava Kamma 17a).

THE PARAH ADUMAH

Mitzvah #397

This is the decree of the Torah that Hashem commanded, saying: Speak to the Jewish people and let them take for you [Moshe and Aharon] a cow that is entirely red, unblemished, upon which no yoke has been placed...take it outside the encampment and slaughter it...and burn it...and the Kohen shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and a crimson thread, and cast it into the burning cow...One who touches a corpse shall be contaminated for seven days. He shall be purified with [the ashes of the red cow]... (Bamidbar Ch. 19).

PREFACE

The most severe form of impurity is that which rests upon corpses. The only way to purify a person who has become contaminated with corpse impurity is to sprinkle upon him the ashes of a Parah Adumah (red cow) on the third and seventh days after his impurity. Even if the first sprinkling is delayed, the second sprinkling cannot be less than four days afterward.

The Torah calls the ritual of Parah Adumah a "chok," meaning it is a decree without a known reason. Rabbi Menachem Recaniti explains this as follows: *“Know that the esoteric idea behind the Parah Adumah is exceedingly hidden, and the Sages say that it was only revealed to Moshe. This does not mean that we do not know the reason for this mitzvah at all, but rather that there is one aspect of this mitzvah that only Moshe understood, namely, why it purifies those upon whom it is sprinkled but contaminates those who touch it. About this Shlomo proclaimed in Koheles (7:23), ‘I said that I would comprehend it, but it is distant from me.’”*

THE CALF AND THE COW

Hashem intended for mankind to be Divine and live forever, but Adam and Eve sinned and brought death to the world. The Jewish people were restored to the original state of Divinity when they received the Torah at Mount Sinai, but they immediately lost it when they sinned with the Golden Calf. The introduction of death through the sin of the Golden Calf brought impurity to the world as well, for the most severe form of impurity rests on corpses.

Thus, the idea behind the ritual of Parah Adumah, which purifies a person who is contaminated with corpse impurity, is that it reverses the effects of the Golden Calf. In the words of the Sages, Hashem commanded us to bring a cow to rectify the sin that involved a calf in the same way a mother cleans up after her child.

A RED COW BECOMES WHITE ASHES

The cow is entirely red, a color that is symbolic of sin and impurity, and which resembles the reddish-golden color of the Golden Calf. The Parah Adumah is incinerated and becomes white ashes, a color that symbolizes purity. By burning the Parah Adumah, the ashes become invested with the power of purification.

WITHOUT A BLEMISH AND WITHOUT A YOKE

The Parah Adumah must be unblemished because the Jewish people were unblemished before the sin of the Golden Calf, and the Parah Adumah restores a person to a state of “unblemished” purity. It cannot bear a yoke, because the Jewish people cast off the yoke of Heaven when they worshipped the Golden Calf.

THE THREE ADDED COMPONENTS

The Parah Adumah is burned in the same way Moshe burned the Golden Calf. We cast cedar wood and hyssop into the fire because the cedar is tall and the hyssop is lowly, and this alludes that one needs to humble himself in order to repent and become pure. A crimson thread is placed in the fire, symbolizing that even if a person is red with sin he can become purified. These three components – the cedar, hyssop, and crimson thread – allude to the three thousand worshippers of the Golden Calf, and to the three punishments to which the people were subjected.

THE PLACE AND TIME

Since the Parah Adumah is associated with impurity, it must be burned outside the *Beis HaMikdash*, unlike the offerings that must be brought specifically within the *Beis HaMikdash*.

The purification process takes one week, in which water that has been sanctified with the ashes is sprinkled on the contaminated person on the third and seventh day after he became contaminated. These two days symbolize purity and sanctity because they correspond to the third day of the week on which Hashem created springs [that purify], and the seventh day of the week that He sanctified as Shabbos.

A LESSON FOR ALL TIME

In closing, we may add that the mitzvah of Parah Adumah causes us to contemplate that death and other imperfections in this world are only because of sin. It is therefore within our power to repent and restore our lives and the world to purity and perfection.

Sources: *Rashi, Midrash HaGadol, Pison Torah, Bamidbar Zutta, Torah Shleimah, Recaniti, Alshich.*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the Parah Adumah, the Red Heifer, are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon 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. 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 mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. The Jewish People resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him for 30 days. Sichon, the Amorite, attacks Bnei Yisrael when they ask 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.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KIDDUSH LEVANAH (PART 5)

UNDER THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON

“My walk on the moon lasted three days. My walk with G-d will last forever.”

Charles Duke – Lunar Module Pilot, Apollo 16

The blessing for Kiddush Levana reads: Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who with His utterance created the heavens, and with the breath of His mouth all their legion. A decree and a schedule did He give them that they not alter their assigned task. They are joyous and glad to perform the Will of their Owner – the Worker of truth Whose work is truth. To the moon He said that it should renew itself as a crown of splendor for those borne [by Him] from the womb, those who are destined to renew themselves like it, and to glorify their Molder for the name of His glorious kingdom. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who renews the months.

The reference to the womb and giving birth is taken from Yeshayah (46:3). “Listen to Me, House of Yaakov, and all the remnant of the House of Israel, who are borne [by Me] from birth, who are carried from the womb.” Rashi eloquently describes how Hashem is telling us that from the very inception of the Jewish Nation He has enveloped us in an embrace that protects us from those who try to totally destroy us.

The Arizal explains that the creation of the Jewish Nation is analogous to a baby in its mother’s womb. The Arizal cites Rabbi Simlai (Niddah 30b) that each fetus is taught the entire Torah before it is born. It experiences the most astonishing clarity of Hashem’s Majesty whilst in the womb but that knowledge is taken away at birth. It is that purity and clarity that a person must strive to restore during their sojourn here in this physical world. So, too, has there never been such a vivid revelation of Hashem’s Glory as there was on the first Seder Night of history. The Jewish People left Egypt in a blaze of spiritual light. And we await the return of that intense and penetrating light to the world that will be heralding in the Messianic era.

As we watch the rebirth of the moon each month it is supposed to remind us that we, too, should be going through a monthly renewal. That it is our responsibility to both magnify and intensify the vivid and untainted light that the Torah brings to the world. Each month brings with it the consciousness that we must reattach ourselves to Hashem anew.

As a part of the beautiful and poignant prayers that we offer up on the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh, we ask for *Chaim Aruchim* – for a long life. Someone once asked the Ponovizher Rav why we are asking for a long life if the prayer will anyway be repeated the Shabbat before the next Rosh Chodesh. Surely, thirty days cannot be described as being a “long life”.

The Ponovizher Rav answered by relating something that had happened to him during the harrowing days of World War II. When the war broke out the Ponovizher Rav found himself in Israel, what was then called the British Mandate of Palestine, and unable to leave. By 1942 Erwin Rommel, at that point possibly the most successful Field Marshal in German history, was in Egypt waiting for the order from the Nazi high command to sweep into Palestine and to ship off its Jews for extermination. At that time the Ponovizher Rav was hospitalized with a serious throat condition that had his doctors extremely worried for his life. Despite his delicate and difficult personal medical condition and despite the indescribable dread that gripped the Jewish population of Palestine, the Ponovizher Rav summoned his son, Rabbi Avraham, and handed him money. “I want you to gather together ten students to start a Yeshivah. And please approach Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky and ask him in my name to say shiur for them.”

The Ponovizher Rav's son was completely taken aback at the suggestion. He told his father, "At this particular moment, I am not sure where I could possibly find ten boys who would want to join a Yeshivah. The whole world has spiraled out of control. We are living moment by moment, there is chaos everywhere. All the young men I know are not looking for a Yeshivah, all they want is to find a way to escape to a safe haven. And, even if there are ten boys who commit to enrolling, how long can a Yeshivah last with the enemy at the border?"

The Ponovizher Rav understood his skepticism, but he taught his son a lesson that he would never forget. "To have a Yeshivah, *even for a few days*, is worthwhile. Because even a few days can be lengthy ones indeed."

"In the end," said the Ponovizher Rav when telling over the story, "Rommel never entered Eretz Yisrael. My throat condition turned out to be benign. And the Ponovizh Yeshivah endures until this very day. They are lengthy days, indeed. Why do we ask for *Chaim Aruchim* each month? The answer is obvious! The amount of spiritual reward that a person can accrue in one month is immeasurable! A month replete with spiritual aspirations and achievements is truly *Chaim Aruchim*!"

That is why the blessing ends with the words "Blessed are You, Hashem, Who renews the months." Because each month contains within its "limited" number of days the potential for limitless eternity.

To be continued...

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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Out in Public

In Parashat Chukat, the Torah records a very public affair wherein Moses spoke and/or acted improperly at the Waters of Merivah, leading Hashem to say, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore you will not bring this congregation to the land that I have given them" (Num. 20:12). This essay focuses on the different terms used in Hebrew to denote something occurring "publicly" by tracing the etymologies of these various synonyms and thereby highlighting the nuances between them. Those words include b'rabim, b'tzibbur, parhessya, pirsun, and b'pumbi.

A term that refers to "a mass of individual people" is tzibbur. Indeed, the term tzibbur in the Mishnah generally refers to the "general public" as a legal construct that can own things and appoint public servants. To that end, tzibbur is used in reference to "communal" sacrifices that were paid for by the Jewish People as a

whole (Pesachim 6:5, 7:4, Shekalim 4:1, 7:5-6, Yoma 2:7, 3:7, 6:1, Sukkah 5:7, Zevachim 5:5, 14:10, Menachot 2:2, 4:5, 5:7, 9:4, 12:4, Temurah 1:6, 2:1-2, 3:4, Kritot 1:6) and to the concept of a cantor/chazzan who leads the prayers or otherwise discharges the masses of their Halachic obligations as the “messenger of the tzibbur” (Brachot 5:5, Rosh Hashanah 4:9).

Although the word tzibbur itself is never used in the Bible, its etymology can be traced to Biblical Hebrew, as the word clearly derives from the trilateral root TZADI-BET-REISH. That root occurs seven times in the Bible (Gen. 41:35, 41:49, Ex. 8:10, Hab. 1:10, Zech. 9:3, Ps. 39:7, and Job 27:16) and always refers to the act of “gathering/amassing” a collection. In it quite intuitive how an inflection of this term can be used in reference to the “public” at large which is – after all – an amassing of people.

Another two words in Rabbinic Hebrew that refer to something done in “public” are parhessya (sometimes pronounced farhessya) and pirsum. Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur in Sefer Tishbi writes that these two words mean the same thing, but that parhessya is a noun used to refer to “publicity,” while pirsum is a verb that refers to the act of “publicizing” something or someone. Both of these words do not appear in the Bible or in the Mishnah, but they do appear in the Talmud. In fact, these two terms are quite common in the Babylonian Talmud, although the word parhessya only appears in one teaching in the Jerusalemic Talmud (Peah 1:1, Sanhedrin 10:1).

The consensus of philologists, linguists, historians, and other scholars is that the Rabbinic Hebrew word parhessya is actually a loanword borrowed from the Greek parrhesia (“open,” “frank speech,” “outspokenness”). That Greek word has been parsed as a shortened form of panresia, which is derived of the prefix pan- (“total,” “all,” “encompassing”) and retos (“speech,” related to rhetoric). In this way, parrhesia refers to the notion of being able to speak one’s mind, which might entail saying any and all sorts of things.

To read the rest of this well-research and fascinating essay, visit us online at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/ check out the full version of the article.

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Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller – Rosh HaYeshiva,
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kaufman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim
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