



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Filling the Void

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

This is the law of the Torah... take for yourself a red heifer... and Miriam died there and she was buried there. (Bamidbar 19:2, 20:1)

The beginning of Parshas Chukas discusses the statute of the Parah Adumah, the red heifer whose ashes were used to purify someone contaminated by a dead body. After discussing those laws, the Torah tells us of the death and burial of Miriam, the righteous sister of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Rashi comments on the juxtaposition of these two topics. Based on the Gemara in Moed Katan (28a), Rashi explains that the death of a righteous individual is comparable to the Parah Adumah – just as the Parah Adumah provides atonement (purity), so too the death of a righteous individual provides atonement. This, though, raises the question, why is the Parah Adumah more special than any other animal offering? All of the offerings bring about atonement, so why is the Parah Adumah singled out?

The Panim Yafos explains that there is a unique characteristic regarding the Parah Adumah. Although the Parah Adumah purifies the impure, it also brings about impurity to the pure – i.e. the Kohen who administers the ashes to purify the impure person becomes temporarily impure himself. Regarding the death of the righteous as well, although it may bring about atonement, this comes at a great price – the existence of the righteous person in our midst is gone and we can no longer benefit from his or her guidance and influence.

When the Jewish people lose a Torah leader, we pray that their passing provide atonement for us, but we are also like orphans bereft of our father. We must try to fill the void left behind and become greater ourselves. May we each strive to achieve greatness and influence those around us to become greater people as well.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Miriam died there and was buried there. There was no water for the assembly... (20, 1 - 2)

There is a custom to spill out the water in the vicinity of a person who has passed on. (Yoreh Deah 339, 5)

This is because the Angel of Death washes off his sword of death in the water in the area and drinking that water could pose a health threat. (Taz)

The juxtaposition of the lack of water to Miriam's passing is a source for this custom. The people had no water because it was spilled out when Miriam died. (Avudraham)

Miriam died through a "kiss from Hashem". (Bamidbar Rabba)

Why would the people pour out the water if the Angel of Death was not involved in Miriam's passing?

Parsha Riddle

What was the most popular name at Aharon HaKohen's funeral?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What connection is there between Moshe's burial spot and the mouth of the earth that swallowed Korach and his followers?

Answer: Both were created Bein Hashmashos (during twilight) at the end of the 6th day of creation.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parshas Chukas begins with the laws of the Red Cow, which it describes as "the decree (chukas) of the Torah." Rashi explains the use of the word *chukas* as follows:

Because Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, "What is this command and what reason is there for it", on this account it writes the term *chukah* about it, implying: It is an enactment from before Me; you have no right to criticize it.

Interestingly, Rashi's language is drawn from a passage in the Talmud that does not actually mention the Red Cow, but distinguishes generally between *mishpatim* - "matters that, even had they not been written, it would have been logical that they be written" - and *chukim* "matters that Satan and the nations of the world challenge because the reason for these mitzvot are not known," such as the prohibitions against eating pork and wearing *sha'atnez* (Yoma 67b).

Elsewhere, the Talmud records a dispute regarding "interpreting the rationale" behind *mitzvos*; R. Yehudah generally does not do so, while R. Shimon generally does (Sanhedrin 21a). The Tosafos explain that their argument is only where there are practical ramifications to such interpretation, i.e., where the ostensible rationale of a *mitzvah* implies a qualification of its scope (Gittin 49b s.v. *ve-Rabbi Shimon*).

Occasionally, however, *halachic* authorities do invoke the rationales of *mitzvos* in order to qualify their scope, despite the fact that the *halachah* follows the opinion of R. Yehudah. A striking example is the Chasam Sofer's argument (*Shut. OC 100*) that according to the opinion of the Rambam and Ramban that the rationale of the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird before taking the eggs or chicks for oneself is to minimize the cruelty to the mother to the extent possible, it follows that if one does not actually **want** the eggs or chicks, then not only is he not **obligated** to send away the mother, but doing so is actually **perverse**, for instead of training ourselves to **avoid** cruelty, we are training ourselves **in cruelty** and to cause suffering to animals for no reason! (Chasam Sofer acknowledges that the Zohar has a very different understanding of the *mitzvah's* rationale, but he does not consider it normative.) (Note that this question of whether the *mitzvah* applies where one does not want the chicks or eggs is a major dispute among the *acharonim*.)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I got bucked teeth.
2. I was not the King of Embarrassment
3. I was a refugee.
4. I got stuck in the mountain.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I was far from "the wisest."
2. I can fix and ruin.
3. I clean up after my child.
4. I am not a yoking matter.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Ohn ben Peles (My wife saved me, I am not off rather..., I am from the first, Neighborly effect.)

#2 The mouth of the earth that swallowed Korach's followers (I am still steaming, I am from twilight, I can't speak, Toothless.)

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