



The Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

The Reason for No Reason

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

"This is the 'chok' of the Torah... take for you a red heifer..." (19:2)

Parshas Chukas begins with the discussion of the *mitzvah* of *Para Aduma*, the red heifer that was used to purify someone who had contact with a dead body. The Torah calls this *mitzvah* a "*chok*." A *chok* is a *mitzvah* for which the Torah does not provide its rationale. Although there may be insights and ideas of the *mitzvah* to which we can relate, its performance is ultimately independent of its understanding or rationale.

The ultimate *chok* is the *mitzvah* of *Para Aduma*. The ashes of the *Para Aduma*, when prepared in the prescribed way, were used to purify someone. Paradoxically, all who were involved in the preparation of the ashes would become impure themselves – as our sages put it: the *Para Aduma* purified the impure and contaminated the pure.

The Midrash even relates that King Shlomo, the wisest of all men, made a special effort to understand the reasons for the *Para Aduma*. In the end, he concluded that the subject was still far from his understanding. The Midrash reveals that Hashem purposefully did not allow the reason for the *mitzvah* to be revealed to anyone other than Moshe Rabbeinu and mandated that it remain hidden until Moshiach. But why must the reason of the *mitzvah* remain hidden?

Rav Yosef Tzvi Salant answers that Hashem withheld the understanding of *Para Aduma* in order to teach us that some things in life are beyond our comprehension. We cannot assume that we will understand everything that happens to us. The question of why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper is such an example.

Hashem gave us the *mitzvah* of *Para Aduma* and purposely withheld its understanding to help us accept the fact that there are occurrences in our lives that we will not understand. When Moshiach arrives, we will learn the reasons for all the paradoxes that we encounter, including the reason for the *mitzvah* of *Para Aduma*.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Whoever touches the corpse of any human being shall be contaminated for seven days... (19:11)

The Sages taught that because a person's life begins as the size of an olive, therefore the minimum requirement for corpse contamination is the size of an olive. (Rambam Tumas Meis 2:2)

The beginning of the creation of man is the size of a bean (which is smaller than an olive). (Rambam Isurei Biah 10:3)

What size does a person begin his/her creation at – the size of an olive or a bean?

Parsha Riddle

What various meanings do words with the root “nun” and “samech” have?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why did Hashem choose the ketores as the means with which to stop the plague? (17:11)

Answer: Since Nadav and Avihu died while bringing ketores, and the 250 men of Korach died while involved with the ketores, people thought the ketores was “a murderer” so Hashem used it now to save their lives to show that it is not the ketores that causes death but rather it is sin. (Rashi)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Chukas*, the Torah relates (20:29): “When the entire assembly saw that Aharon had perished, they wept for Aharon thirty days, the entire House of Israel (*kol beis Yisrael*).” In contrast, the Torah later relates (*Devarim* 34:8) that when Moshe died, “The Children of Israel (*bnei Yisrael*) bewailed Moshe in the plains of Moav for thirty days.” The Sages understand that “*kol beis Yisrael*” is broader than “*bnei Yisrael*” – in particular, the former denotes both men and women while the latter denotes only men – and they explain that Aharon was more popular than Moshe, since he “loved peace and pursued peace,” which manifested itself in at least two distinct ways:

- While Moshe would reprimand the people harshly, Aharon would inspire even sinners to reform by greeting them respectfully, which would cause them to be too embarrassed to continue to sin.
- Aharon would routinely strive to reconcile quarreling individuals and spouses. (*Avos de-Rabbi Nosson* 12:1-6; *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 17; *Yalkut Shimoni* 764)

While popularity is of course not necessarily a reliable indicator of righteousness, the Sages (*Avos* 1:12) hold up Aharon as the model to emulate: “Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people, and bringing them closer to the Torah. (It is in elaboration of this Mishna that the discussion in *Avos de-Rabbi Nosson* takes place.)

Moreover, our Sages are actually implicitly critical of Moshe's harshness toward those whom he believed to have acted improperly. The *Sifrei* (*Bamidbar* 157, to 31:21) states: “R. Elazar says: In three places (Moshe) fell into anger and (consequently) fell into error.” One of the three is the incident of the “waters of strife (*mei merivah*)” recorded in this week's *parashah*, in which Moshe displayed anger by saying (20:10) “Listen now, O rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?” – and immediately afterward (v. 11) committed his fatal error: “Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice.”

Elsewhere (*Yalkut* 974), our Sages are even implicitly critical of Moshe's shattering of the Tablets in anger (see *Shemos* 32:19). Commenting on the verse (*Koheles* 7:9) “Do not be hastily upset,” they explain that when Hashem subsequently commanded Moshe (*Shemos* 34:1) “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones,” He meant to say “You became angry, you threw (the Tablets) down, you shattered them, you replace them.”

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. (Some say) I am a medical sign.
2. The attacker healed.
3. My end was powder.
4. I made them look up.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am similar to Esav.
2. I confused King Shlomo.
3. There have been 9.
4. There will be a 10th.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Korach (I was not bald, Nor was I cold, I ended up being very hot, My descendant threw me off.)

#2 Leviim (We were swapped in, We guarded, We come from the “third staff,” We have priestly cousins.)

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