

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

“Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, ‘Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your brother, and speak to the rock... Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock twice; abundant water came forth...’” (19:7-11)

Instruction booklets are a dying breed. Nowadays when you buy a new product — be it a computer or a washing machine — among the welter of paperwork wrapped in pristine cellophane you will find a small cardboard gatefold which will have emblazoned on it in large and strident letters “READ THIS FIRST!”

Having just bought the latest superdooper whizzbang all-whistles-and-bells computer, washing machine, palm pilot or Ferrari, the last thing you want to start bothering with is reading the instructions; you just want to plug the thing in and GO!

You just paid all that money for this beautiful gleaming new toy, and no-one is going to tell you how to use it! Least of all the manufacturer.

Aware of HCS (Hysterical Consumer Syndrome), companies who don’t want to see their new product back in the repair department two minutes after the box has been opened have produced a MMSK (Minimum Machine Survival Kit). All you have to do is READ THIS FIRST!

“Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, ‘Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your broth-

er, and speak to the rock... Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock twice; abundant water came forth...’”

Because Moshe struck the rock instead of speaking to it, G-d didn’t allow him to enter the Land of Israel. It was a tragic mistake.

It’s difficult to understand how Moshe could have made such a fundamental error. G-d told him specifically to *speak* to the rock. Why did it even enter Moshe’s mind to hit the rock? Why didn’t Moshe just do as Hashem had told him?

Never try and second guess the Manufacturer.

This world is no less precise than a computer. Its functional parameters no less forgiving than a Ferrari. If you try to build a 500-piece *Ravell*® plastic model of the *USS George Washington* without using the instructions, you’re going to end up with more than a few spare bits at the end — and the whole thing will look like it was *kludged* together.

Moshe reasoned that if G-d told him to take the staff, it must be that he should hit the rock to produce water (as indeed he had done on a previous occasion).

Moshe was provoked to anger by the vehemence of the people complaining. Instead of reading the Manufacturer’s instructions, he looked at “the parts in the box” and thought he knew how to put it all together.

When all else fails — read the instructions.

Sources:

• Rashi, *Be’er Mayim Chaim* and others

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the *para aduma* — 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 which 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 result-

ed 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. *Bnei Yisrael* 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 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 Exodus.

HAFTARAH

At the Amonite king's demand that Israel withdraw from land east of the Jordan, Israel's new head, Yiftach, gives him a history lesson taken straight out of this week's Torah Portion. Yiftach relates how the Jews had captured that land in self-defense against an unprovoked attack, and that it had been won from the Emorites, not from the

Amonites. Ignoring this, the Amonites attack; and — echoing the vow made by the Jews in their battle for that same land three hundred years earlier — Yiftach makes a vow. He vows to sacrifice the first thing he sees exiting his house upon his victorious return. G-d gives him victory, and, in a tragic twist, Yiftach's daughter is the first to exit his house to greet him upon his return.

the Talmud. This refers to our obligation to honor a leader of the Torah community even if he doesn't quite measure up to the leaders of old. Compared to Shmuel, Yiftach's spiritual stature was small: Shmuel's greatness as prophet is likened to that of Moshe and Aharon; whereas regarding Yiftach the word "prophet" is never even used. Nevertheless, "Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation." Dreaming about the great leaders of "the good old days" is no excuse to ignore the direction of our present-day Torah leaders.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

"Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation," says

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

When Miriam died, the people didn't properly eulogize and mourn for her, because they didn't realize the extent of her greatness. So Hashem made the water cease when she died, showing the people that for 40 years in the desert the water flowed in her merit.

• Adapted from *Kli Yakar*

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A special mazel tov to
RABBI & MRS. REUVEN LAUFFER & FAMILY
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son

ELI

The Ohr Somayach Family

THE FLATTERING STORK

“Ten measures of wisdom came down from Heaven to this world — nine of them were received by *Eretz Yisrael* and the rest by the entire world. Ten measures of beauty came down to this world — nine of them were received by Jerusalem and the rest by the entire world.”

Thus begins a long list of how certain characteristics were endowed to the various nations. One of these is the designation that ten measures of haughtiness and flattery came down to this world, and that nine of them were received by Babylon and later by Eilat.

The Tanachic source for the endowment of these two negative characteristics to Babylon is the enigmatic prophecy of Zecharia (5:9-11): “Then I raised my eyes and, behold, I saw two women go out and the wind was in their wings, and they had the wings of a stork...to build with it a house in the land of Shinar (Babylon).” Rabbi Yochanan explained that this refers to the haughtiness and flattery which descended to Babylon.

Where does the aforementioned prophecy hint at these two characteristics?

The “wind in their wings,” says Rashi, is a reference to haughtiness, for the Hebrew word “*ruach*” is used to describe both winds and spirits, in this case the lofty spirit of haughtiness. But where is there any reference to flattery? Rashi’s suggestion is that the key is the word “stork.” The Hebrew word for stork is “*chasidah*” which sounds like the Hebrew word for kindness — “*chesed*.” The *gemara* (*Mesechta Chullin 63a*) explains that this non-kosher bird is so called because it acts with kindness towards its friends by sharing its food with them.

Rashi’s explanation leaves us puzzled. Why should the behavior of a kindness-dispensing stork be a symbol of flattery? The same question, however, has already been asked as to why the Torah prohibited eating the stork. In his commentary on Chumash (*Vayikra 11:13*), Ramban writes that the Torah prohibited the birds which have a cruel nature. How does this apply to the stork, which acts with kindness towards its friends?

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir (RYM), the first head of the Chassidic dynasty of Gur, explained that kindness cannot be restricted to friends, and food must be shared with all who are hungry. Selective kindness can thus be viewed as self-serving rather than as altruistic, characteristic of the insensitiveness of non-kosher birds. This may be Rashi’s meaning as well: When kindness is restricted to friends it is probably the product of a self-serving interest in reciprocity, which is at the core of flattery which one showers upon an undeserving person in order to gain his favor.

• *Kiddushin 49b*

WHAT A JEW REALLY WANTS

Even though a divorce is valid only if the man gives the *get* document of his own free will, there are certain situations in which the rabbinical court compels a reluctant husband to divorce his wife. The court is empowered in such circumstances to coerce the man until he declares that he wishes to go through with the divorce.

How can we rely on the consent produced by pressure, asks the *gemara*, when we assume from his initial reluctance that in his heart he is opposed to the divorce?

The *gemara* attempts to use this as proof that what is in one’s heart cannot contradict what he verbalizes; but this proof is rejected because this situation may be different in that we have the right to assume that his verbalized consent is sincere, for he wishes to fulfill the mitzvah of obeying the Sages.

Rambam (*Laws of Divorce 2:20*) elaborates on the reason for considering valid a divorce given under pressure, and he explains as follows why this is different from someone pressured into doing something that the Torah does not require him to do, such as selling or giving away some possession:

“When someone’s evil inclination has taken hold of him to avoid fulfilling a mitzvah, or to commit a sin, and he is beaten until he does what he is obligated to do or refrains from what he is forbidden to do, he is not considered as acting against his will. It is he, rather, who has coerced himself with an evil attitude to act against his true will. We therefore view the man whom we force to divorce his wife as one who truly wishes to be a part of Jewry and truly desires to fulfill the *mitzvot* and to refrain from sins, but who is the helpless victim of his evil inclination. Once he has been pressured to the point where his evil inclination is subdued and he declares his consent, we consider it as his having divorced of his own free will.”

• *Kiddushin 50a*

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PARSHA Q&A ?

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 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?

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 - 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, 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 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 - 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.

POPULATION EXPLOSION

From: Yakov Spil

Dear Rabbi,

I should open by saying how much pleasure I have reading your answers which are full of wisdom and good sense. A friend asked me a beautiful question recently: When mashiach comes, will people still be giving birth, even though there will be techiat hamaytim (revival of the dead)? I answered that I didn't think that the mitzvah of "be fruitful and multiply" would become nullified. My friend said the world sure would be (over) populated!

Dear Yaakov Spil,

Will there still be childbirth when mashiach comes? Yes. On the contrary, the Talmud indicates that future birth-rates will multiply astronomically:

"Rabban Gamliel expounded: In the future, a woman will give birth every day, as the verse says: 'You will conceive and give birth together.' " (Yirmiyahu)

How will we feed all those people? Where will we put them?

The Talmud says that a newborn baby "brings his bread with him" into the world. That is, the miracle of a new life brings with it the blessing of more sustenance.

You know, in the sixties it was predicted that in a decade or two population growth would outstrip food production. What happened? G-d enlightened us to new technology and new farming methods, and, presto! food

production kept up with population growth. G-d has no limit to the resources with which to provide for the world.

Your friend's concern reminds me of a story: During an astronomy lecture, a professor told his class that in 10 billion years the sun would burn itself out. A young woman jumped to her feet and cried, "What are we going to do about this!"

"Really," said the professor, "are you so concerned about what happens 10 billion years from now?"

"10 billion?" said the young woman, and she let out a sigh of relief. "I thought you said 10 million."

The comparison is not exact, for the mashiach can come any day; but the point is the same: We need to concern ourselves with the world as it is today and let G-d "worry" about providing for us in the miraculous future epoch.

Sources:

- Tractate Shabbat 30b
- Tractate Nida 31b

MEATY FRIES

**From: Dana Erlenger
in Ft. Lauderdale, FL**

Dear Rabbi,

Can I eat in a non-kosher restaurant if I order only kosher food like salad, etc?

Dear Dana Erlenger,

In general, no. You may not rely on statements of someone who does not keep kosher regarding the kashrut of

an item; especially when he is trying to sell you that item! Furthermore, restaurants may not even know all the ingredients of the processed food they use. Salads could contain non-kosher seasonings or oils, be cut with a non-kosher knife, or other concerns.

Consider the following clip from a May 24, 2001 news item:

OAK BROOK, Illinois (AP)

McDonald's Corp. has issued an apology for any confusion surrounding the beef flavoring in its U.S. french fries, a practice that prompted a lawsuit this month by some Hindus and vegetarians. McDonald's has acknowledged that a beef flavoring is added to its french fries during potato processing before they are shipped to restaurants in the United States. McDonald's announced in 1990 that its restaurants would no longer use beef fat in cooking french fries and that only pure vegetable oil would be used.

Which reminds me: A woman once entered a deli and asked to see the kashrut certificate.

"Don't worry about it!" said the man behind the counter.

"But how do I know if it's kosher?" she asked.

The man pointed to a black-and-white photo hanging on the wall. "You see that?" he said, gesturing to the angelic face of an old man engrossed in Talmud study. "That was my father!"

"Look," said the woman, "If your picture was on the wall and your father was behind the counter, I wouldn't ask questions."

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Ohr.Edu

I have visited here several times already, and find that Ohr.edu gives much information and answers many of my questions.

- Bob Spinelli, University of Chicago

Re: Mother's Day

I recently heard the following comparison put forth in answer for those who say "But every day should be mother's day": We are supposed to remember the Exodus from Egypt every day of our lives, too; nevertheless, G-d set aside a special holiday (Passover) to commemorate it!

- Shuli Gutmann

We're not necessarily being taken advantage of just because someone asks for...

A HELPING HAND

I was at a celebration of a *pidyon haben*, redemption of the first born. Sitting down at the meal, my little sister asked me to pass the soda bottle. I poured for her, since she is little and the bottle heavy. As soon as I started pouring, the woman next to me — whom I had never seen before — grabbed her cup and jugged it out in front of me, obviously wanting me to pour for her as well. How rude, I thought. She doesn't even say "hello" or "please"! Of course, I poured it for her. Shortly thereafter, my other sister asked for soda. I poured for her too, and the lady immediately thrust out her cup. Again, no please, no thanks. "What is this?" I thought, but I said

nothing. Toward the end of the meal, someone across the table was pouring a drink. She noticed, too, and held out her cup. I just watched and wondered.

Then, I noticed that one of her hands had an irregular curl at the wrist. It suddenly dawned on me that she had not once used that arm to eat with, but left it resting on her lap the entire meal, always using the other hand to pick up her fork or cup. It was now obvious that she had trained herself to notice other people pouring drinks because she could not lift the bottle with one hand and pour for herself. This was probably how she'd grown up, relying on other people to do it for her. I kicked myself under the table for being so foolish, for not trying to see "The other side of the story." I hope next time I will. N.D.

Send your stories and insights on any subject to: info@ohr.edu

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

Lloyd Quinnstein from Leeds wrote:

Why was Aharon punished for the incident of the water from the rock? According to the text, it seems Aharon played no role there. If Moshe was punished for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it, what did Aharon do wrong?

Dear Lloyd Quinnstein,

According to the commentary of the Abarbanel, you're

right: Aharon was not being punished for the incident of the water from the rock; rather, he was denied entry into the Land of Israel because of his role in the Golden Calf. But because his intentions had been pure (he agreed to make the calf only in order to stall the people until Moshe's return, hoping thus to minimize their guilt) the Torah downplays the "golden calf" aspect of his punishment and instead faults him here in the relatively minor sin of the incident of the water from the rock.

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.edu with your questions on any Parsha!

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 *Para Aduma*
 20:26 Aharon's Special Shroud

שְׁמַחְתֶּם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
 שְׁמַחְתֶּם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
 שְׁמַחְתֶּם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
 "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem"