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PARSHAS CHUKAS EDITION – VOLUME 15, ISSUE 23 – TAMMUZ 9TH, 5875/JULY 5TH, 2025

TORAH QUESTION by RABBI MOSHE KLEIN: CHUKAS - WE LIVE IN THE MIRACULOUS WORLD ABOVE NATURE

Last week's question: What made Miriam worthy of the Zechus (merit) to have a well of water in the desert, which hydrated the entire nation on their travels, and why did it cease upon Miriam's passing? There must be a measure-for-measure consideration here.

Answer: The Midrash (at the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar) writes that Hashem told the Jewish nation, "You are not going into a regular desert, where there is no place to sleep and no food to eat. In this desert, there are Clouds of Glory in the merit of Aharon that smoothed out the ditches and killed the snakes and scorpions." There was food in the form of the Mann due to the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu. Then, there was the Well in the merit of Miriam. The Midrash adds that this is because Miriam said *shirah* (song) on the water. What does that mean? All the Jews said Shira, not just Miriam - yet she has the *zechus* (merit). There must be something different about her *shirah*.

Furthermore, we see in Hallel (Tehillim 114: 3-4, 6): "*What did the sea see that it fled, the Jordan ran backward (Rashi explains it split like at Krias Yam Suf), mountains skipped like rams, hills like sheep. Tremble....at the presence of Hashem. Who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flinty rock into a fountain.*" The **Alshich** adds that at Krias Yam Suf the mountains were dancing. We see that the stones turned into water, which is referring to Miriam's Well, and this has a connection with Krias Yamsuf. What's the connection between the Splitting of the Sea and the Well of Miriam?

The **Shem Mishmuel** writes that all the Jews sang a song at the sea, but Miriam added to the song (Shemos 15:21): "*He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.*" We also find Miriam saying *shirah* with a drum, unlike the rest of the Jews. Rashi explains that the righteous women had a belief that Hashem would make a miracle.

Let's explain. For a rock to turn into water is a complete change of *tevah* (nature). Something that seemingly had no life in it – an inanimate stone – to provide the ingredient that helps things grow and gives life is a complete turn. Everything happens in the World because of *Emunah* (faith in Hashem). Miriam provided the belief system to understand that Hashem is running the world in a way that a stone can turn into water. If a complete change of nature is possible, it means that nature doesn't rule over us. Something lifeless can be brought up and become the provider of life for everyone.

Pharmacy



Furthermore, the Gemara (Sotah 12a) relates that Amram was the leader of his generation in Egypt. When Pharaoh decreed to cast all the boys into the Nile River, Amram said that it was futile to have any more children. He divorced his wife; then, all the Jews divorced their wives, as well. Miriam told her father, "Your decree is worse than Pharaoh's! It is uncertain whether Pharaoh's decree will be fulfilled. You are a Tzadik, and your decree will certainly be fulfilled - as you decree, it will be fulfilled!"

We know Amram never sinned (Shabbos 155b), and he believed that having a child during that kind of decree was suicide. Remember, we are talking about a very great man, Moshe Rabbeinu's father. Miriam's counter to that was, "*Why are you working in this world at all? Pharaoh made a decree, but Hashem will bring the salvation. We don't live in Pharaoh's world – we live in a world of Bitachon!*" Miriam looked at a problem where there was no respite but she knew that even in a case of an impossible decree, there was something to be done.

As the Gemara brings down, it was in the merit of the righteous women (and their Emunah) that we merited a redemption. If one lives in a world that is above nature, no decree is set in stone. This mindset is what caused the miracle. While everyone was being beaten in Mitzrayim, babies were drowned and slaughtered in front of their parents under a tyrannical ruler with total control, Miriam only saw salvation.

This is what it means (Shemos 15:20) that the righteous women in that generation led by Miriam "*were confident that Hashem would perform miracles for them and they accordingly had brought timbrels/drums with them from Egypt.*" Why didn't the men have the instruments? The answer is that Miriam had already prepared them during the terrible situation when babies were being thrown into the Nile River. →

THE LEARNING IN THIS NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE A ZECHUS FOR THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF OUR FAMILY IN ERETZ YISRAEL AND A ZECHUS FOR A COMPLETE REFUAH OF CHAIM SHAUL BEN ESTER AND LEEBA MIRIAM GEULAH BAS LEAH.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK BY RABBI KLEIN, CONCLUSION

Everyone else was panicking, while Miriam was already singing the song of freedom. The entire merit of Miriam's Well – the stone changing its essence – was because she lived in a totally different world. One can believe in Hashem to the point that the whole nature doesn't apply to them. This was the difference between Miriam's song and the rest of the nation's song. The people had to wait for the actual salvation to sing the song, whereas Miriam didn't have to wait. Because she trusted Hashem, she took a drum during the decree and saved the Jewish nation from going into complete demise. She influenced her father to remarry her mother, and the entire nation followed suit.

This also explains why the water was splitting. It is awesome and frightening when nature sees that it's not following the laws it's usually governed by. The mountains saw the water split and started jumping. Miriam doesn't live by the laws of nature; she lives with Hashem, Who can change nature. The Jewish people live outside of nature – we live with Hashem, and that enables us to see tremendous miracles in our lives.

This week's question: What is the idea of Ba'al Peor; how does it make any sense to serve an idol by defecating? We are talking about people who believed they were serving something Divine. Why would they choose such a disgusting and disrespectful act as a form of worship?

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SUGAR RUSH ON THE 613 MITZVOS BY R'ELI REIT **MITZVAH # 170 – HEARING THE SHOFAR**

We are required to hear the Shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah, as the Pasuk (Bamidbar 29:1) says, "*It shall be a day of blowing*". A shofar is the horn of a sheep or a goat. It is hollowed out and a hole is made in the pointy end of the horn so that air can be blown into the shofar to produce the necessary sounds. The first sound is called "tekiah". It is a long sound.

It is followed by a broken sound called "*shevarim*". A sound broken into smaller pieces is called "*teruah*". Then, a "*tekiah*" is blown again.

**YESODE
HASHOLOM**

SHALOM BAYIS INSIGHTS FROM RASHI
BY RABBI YITZ GREENFIELD

CHUKAS – MEANINGFUL APPRECIATION

In this week's Parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu sends a message to Edom asking if Klal Yisroel could pass through. Moshe specifies (Bamidbar 20:17) "*Let us pass through your land; we will not pass through field or vineyard, and we will not drink water from a well; we will travel the king's road, and we will not veer right or left.*" Rashi explains that Moshe's message was a message of how much gratitude Klal Yisroel will have if Edom allows them to pass through. Moshe said that "although we have manna to eat and our own miraculous well to drink from, we will buy water and food from you!" This lesson is something Rashi suggests that we act upon whenever we travel. He tells us that when we are away from home, even if we bring food with us, we should purchase food to benefit the local shopkeepers.

This is a new level of appreciation that we can apply to our marriages. Sometimes in marriage, it is easy to take our spouses for granted. When our spouse takes out the garbage, when our spouse does laundry, when our spouse fills the car with gas, we might not appreciate it. We might think to ourselves, I also do that sometimes, and my spouse doesn't show me gratitude, or my spouse is really doing it for themselves. Although I get benefit, it's not actually for ME, so I don't need to show gratitude, we reason. If we take the lesson of Rashi and bring it into our daily lives, we will look for ways to express our appreciation to our spouse. Let's imagine what our homes would look like if we appreciated everything our spouse did for us.

How can we take Rashi's message to heart and change our attitudes? The first step to accomplish this goal is to notice. Let's try to take note of all the effort our spouse is putting in. The next step is to express our *hakaras hatov* by making sure to include the effort involved, as we express meaningful appreciation to our spouse. For example, if we notice our spouse taking out the garbage, we could say, "Thank you for noticing that the garbage needed to be taken out. Thank you for taking care of it for us." Or to the spouse who did the laundry, "Thank you for collecting all of the clothing and for putting it through the machines and folding it for us." Meaningful appreciation is a game changer in marriage. It can turbo-boost the emotional connection between spouses. Noticing and expressing appreciation is not easy to do regularly. Let's put in the effort, and may Hashem bless our efforts with success and fill our homes with Shalom Bayis.

Rabbi Greenfield, MS MFT, is the author of the Torah marriage toolbox course. Create more Shalom Bayis in your home by visiting torahmarriage.com or by emailing rabbigreenfield@gmail.com

SPLENDID QUOTE OF THE WEEK **BY RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER**

"We must share the burden of our brothers".

Eisav got out of the slavery that was destined for the children of Avraham. When the Jews finished with *Mitzrayim* and were now on the way to get the "good part" of their destiny, they were blocked by Eisav, who didn't let them go through to reach Eretz Yisroel. They should have let us pass through, and this would at least be "their part" in sharing the burden. Moav and Ammon, as relatives, should have also let us go through but didn't. We must be better to help our brothers when they are in trouble and not follow in Eisav's wicked ways.



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Parshas Chukas is one of the transitional portions in the Torah. It basically finishes at the end of the 40 years of wandering in the Desert. We came out of Egypt, got the Torah, got the Torah against, set up the Mishkan and the camp, and went all through the events. Then, just travels for 38 years (after the spies' report would die in the Desert).

This Parsha picks up in the 40th year with the death of Miriam and the Well. There is one curious story in the Parsha. The people begin to complain about the Mann as being their only form of sustenance for 40 years. Now, Mann can taste like anything one wants, so it should not have been a point of contention, but there's a bigger question. They were about to enter Eretz Yisrael when they would never see the Mann again in their lives; why are they complaining about it now?

It's fascinating to point out that the people complain about the Mann twice, once in Parshas Beha'aloscha, which was at the beginning of their journey through the desert, and in our Parsha, at the end of the 40 years. Their complaint in Beha'aloscha was also on the precipice of them going into the Land of Israel (before the spies' report doomed them to wander), where they would never see the Mann again. Furthermore, their complaints about the Mann were dramatic. When they ate the Mann, they were living in the Desert surrounded by the *Ananei Hakovod* (Clouds of Glory) as protection. Moshe with rays of light shining out of his face and the Well of Miriam rolling with them.



This was a highly spiritual existence, but it came with a price: if someone stepped out of line, they got zapped right away (as the complainers did). Now Hashem wanted them to go into Israel and be a farmer and eat regular food. They didn't know if they could do that or handle eating regular meat. They had meat in the Midbar, but they had to offer it as a *Karbon* (*Shelamim*), so they ate this *Kodshim* in holiness. To eat regular food and still maintain the same level of Kedusha didn't seem feasible to them.

That's why they asked for meat in the Desert, and they couldn't do it, and many Jews tragically perished. Here too, they were afraid because they didn't know if they could live as regular people. It was frightening to them. The purpose of the Midbar was to reach those heights in the camp and continue that level in their own personal lives. Shemini Atzeres is that message: spend the entire month in holiness, seven days of which is in the Sukkah – both in this world and out of it and then spend the last day bringing that holiness into our house.

INSIGHTS INTO THE RAMCHAL'S CLASSIC WORK, PATH OF THE UPRIGHT **CHAPTER 19, PART 32 – THERE ARE LEVELS TO ATTACHMENT TO HASHEM**



Summary: We are currently discussing the concept of loving Hashem, namely the part about clinging to Him in a way that negates one's sense of self in favor of the one he loves.

The **Ramchal** continues: ***“The Torah exhorts us many times on the clinging [to G-d]: ‘to love the L-rd your G-d. and to cling to Him’ (Devarim 30:20), ‘to Him shall you cling’ (Devarim 10:20 and 13:5). And David said: ‘my soul clings to You’ (Tehilim 63:9). All these verses speak of one matter, namely, the clinging with which a man clings to G-d, blessed be He, to such an extent that he is unable to detach himself and budge from Him.”*** (*Mesilas Yesharim Chapter 19*)

His love for Hashem is so all-consuming that it is impossible for him to disengage from the thought of Hashem and His Torah. The **Rambam** (*Hilchos Teshuvah*, as brought down by the *Way of the Upright*) also stresses the inability of a person who truly loves Hashem to stop thinking of Him. The concept of being lovesick for another exists for this reason: so we can relate to how we connect to Hashem.

The Ramchal continues: ***“And our sages of blessed memory said: Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: ‘the Holy One, blessed be He, used three expressions of love regarding the Jewish people, and we learn all of them from the account of Shechem ben Chamor: ‘clinging’, ‘yearning’, and ‘desire’ (Bereishis Rabbah 80:7). These are actually (mamash) the three main branches of love, namely, the yearning I mentioned, the clinging, and the pleasure and joy felt by the lover when engaged in matters of his beloved.”*** (*ibid. Chapter 19*)

We know that Shechem ben Chamor kidnapped and violated Yaakov's daughter, Dina. The Torah goes on to use three terms to describe his intense desire for her, stating that he cleaved to her, yearned for her, and delighted in her (see Bereishis 34:3, 34:8 and 34:19). So, the Midrash teaches that Hashem expresses His love for Israel using the same three terms (see Devarim 4:4, 7:7, and Malachi 3:12). Being that it is natural for love to be reciprocal and seeing that a human being can love in these three ways, the Ramchal infers that our love for Hashem must incorporate all three aspects mentioned above.

Rav Elya Lopian points out that in highlighting the intensity of Shechem's love for Dinah, the Sages meant to derive an underlying lesson about translating the love of Hashem into action. When the sons of Yaakov pretended to agree to allow Shechem to marry Dinah, they made one stipulation: that all the males got a Bris. This was an exceedingly difficult request. Ordinarily, one could imagine all the excuses that Shechem would have concocted to absolve himself of this requirement. However, Shechem's desire for Dinah was so intense that he hurried to fulfill this “impossible” demand. This shows that a strong desire and love for something can make the most difficult thing seem easy.

Having a relationship with Hashem can get monotonous, just like a marriage or can if there is no innovation and creativity in expressing the special bond. Innovation comes from passion and an insatiable desire to connect on deeper levels. We need learn how to identify the kisses that we get from Hashem, how to truly appreciate our blessings and how to see the hardships as stepping-stones for a more meaningful connection with Him.

To be continued next week. B'Ezras Hashem.

CHUKAS - THE MOST VALUABLE MATH YOU CAN LEARN IS HOW TO CALCULATE THE FUTURE COST OF YOUR CURRENT DECISIONS

After relating how the Bnei Yisrael defeated Sichon and conquered his kingdom of Cheshbon and her neighboring cities, the Torah gives a bit of a historic and poetic description of Cheshbon (Bamidbar 21:27-28): *"Therefore, the Moshlim (literally: orators) say 'Come to Cheshbon! Built and well-founded; the city of Sichon. For a fire came from Cheshbon, a flame from the city of Sichon, consuming Ar of Moav.'" The poem continues to describe how Moav suffered defeat at the hands of Sichon.*

The Gemara (Bava Basra 78b) interprets these Psukim in a more homiletic way, as a directive to those who exercise self-control - *Moshlim b'Yitzram*: "Come to Cheshbon - make an accounting! Calculate the true cost of your Mitzvos and Aveiros." This is an idea we may be familiar with from Pirkei Avos. How much reward will your investment in a Mitzvah return? How much will the momentary benefit of the Aveira truly cost you? The Gemara continues: *"If you do act with this reckoning then 'Tibaneh V'Tikonen' - you will be building yourself a life in this world and establishing yourself eternally in Olam Haba!"*

When we consider the future impact of all our actions, it changes the lens of how we see our choices. Money doesn't have an exchange rate in the next world. However, in this world, we can use our money and all of the other resources we have been gifted - our time, our energy, our talents - to convert them into eternal capital. When we spend money on food, we can exercise our self-control to nourish ourselves in a way that gives us the energy to keep accumulating more of these transferable "assets". We can also acquire enjoyable food that brings Simcha to others - or even to ourselves - so that we can use our own Simcha to bring joy and Chizuk to others.

Takeaway: Make the Cheshbon - what percentage of your dollar will you end up with at the end?

Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, ZT"L, a renowned dayan for the Badatz, had to have a pacemaker installed late in his life. However, the doctors were worried that he might not wake up after the anesthesia due to his old age and frailty. Rav Fisher told them he could undergo the procedure without anesthesia. The doctors thought he was crazy, not understanding how anyone could endure the pain of having the heart cut open while awake. Nevertheless, he reassured them and went ahead with the procedure, learning Torah in his mind to distract himself from the pain. Throughout the entire procedure, he didn't move a muscle or make a single sound.

Many years later, Rav Fisher had grown even frailer. Simply speaking and answering questions was an enormous challenge for him. Attendants were appointed to ensure that only people with very serious issues would be allowed to speak with him, and even then, they would speak first to his grandson, who would relay the message to Rav Fisher. One time, a man whom Rav Fisher had known for years came with a very urgent life-or-death halachic dilemma.

His grandson relayed the problem to the Rav and then told the man his answer. The man needed clarification on something, so the grandson went back. This conversation continued back-and-forth for a while, about 20 minutes. Towards the end, his grandson asked, "Zeidi, since this is clearly something very important to you, why didn't you have him brought in so you could speak face-to-face? The conversation would've been finished in a quarter of the time."

Rav Fisher responded, "This man is suffering! If I see him and witness his pain, I don't know if I'll have the heart to withstand his agony." Rav Fisher was strong enough to withstand having his heart physically cut open, yet soft enough to feel so much for fellow Jews that their pain becomes unbearable. That is true empathy. That is greatness.

Comment: In this week's parsha, Korach, we learn about one of Moshe's few mistakes, how he struck the rock instead of speaking softly to it. This is a mistake we still make far too often today. When someone is angry at us, how often do we respond with anger? Behind every frown, every criticism, and every outburst lies a cup so full of pain that it's pouring over. Empathy is the quiet strength that lets a soft tone break through to even the hardest of rocks, transforming it into a wellspring of life.



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