

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Mazel Tov to Yossi and Amian Kelemer on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Kfir. Mazal Tov also to his grandparents, Susan Frost and Rabbi Yisroel and Leba Kelemer. Mazel Tov to all the family and friends who are here to share in the simcha.

Thank you to the drasha sponsors:

- Barry and Barbara Bass, in memory of Barry's sister, Rochelle Bass a"h, whose 58th *yahrtzeit* is the 9th of Tamuz.
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- Layne and Mike Lowenstein, in loving memory of Layne's father, Philip S. Marcus, Faival Shraga ben HaRav Yosef Yaakov z"l, whose first *yahrtzeit* is today, the 9th of Tamuz.
- Flo and Larry Ziffer, in memory of Larry's father, Pinchas ben Yosef Elimelech z"l, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 9th of Tamuz.

May all the *neshamos* have an *aliya* and may the sponsors be rewarded for their generosity with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health.

This week's Parsha, Chukas, is named for the *chok*--the law of the *para aduma*--the red heifer. The Talmud teaches that *para aduma* is called a *chok*, a statute which is beyond our understanding, because even Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men, could not understand it. How could the ashes of the red heifer transform someone who was ritually impure to become pure, and at the same time have the opposite effect on the one who sprinkles the ashes--transforming him from a state of purity to impurity? But why is it called *chukas haTorah*?

Rav Moshe Shternbach, in his sefer *Taam V'Daas*, explains that the *chok* of the *para aduma* is called *chukas haTorah*, representing the entire Torah, and not simply *chukas ha-para*, limited to this specific *mitzva*. He says that these specific words חקת התורה teach us a very important lesson about life--all of Torah is represented by the mysterious effects of the *para aduma*; the lesson is **that context is everything**.

עוד יש לבאר הלשון חקת התורה...ויש בזה למוד גדול לדרכי העבודה בקיום התורה, שהרי נבדלו בני האדם איש מרעהו באפיים ובתכונות נפשם, ...עד כי דרך אחת מדרכי העבודה שהיא רצויה ביותר עבור אדם אחד, לא תועיל היא עצמה אצל רעהו, לפי מצבו ומדרכתו, וע"כ כל אחד ואחד לבדוק עצמו ולהכיר היטב את תכונותיו ומעלותיו, ועל ידי זה יוכל הוא להתבונן מה חבותו בעולמו...ודבר זה נרמז בפרה שאף שאת הטמא היא מטהרת, בכל זאת הטהור לפי מדריבלו מטמא על ידה...

Every person is different and reaches their fulfillment in different ways. That which is life-saving for one person can have the opposite effect on someone else. Even in *avodas Hashem*, the approach of one person is not the right approach for someone else...and even that which may be the correct approach at one stage of life, or of Jewish history may be damaging at another stage of life, or a different place or time. The same thing can be *metamei* one person and be *metaher* someone else, and the opposite...

I believe that this idea can help us understand one of the most enigmatic episodes in the Torah, which also appears in this Parsha--Moshe Rabbeinu's punishment for his misdeeds in *Mei Meriva*. Moshe Rabbeinu had done so much for the Jewish people and he wanted so much to enter the Land of Israel. Nevertheless, Hashem told him that he could view Eretz Yisrael from afar, but he could not enter it. He was told that this was the penalty for his actions with *Mei Meriva*, when Hashem told him to speak to the rock and, instead, he hit the rock.

It is tragic to read that Moshe would not be allowed to finish the job he began...to experience the final piece of redemption—to enter the Land of Israel. What exactly was Moshe Rabbeinu's great sin?

Rav Hirsch, in the name of the great **Chacham Bernays**, a great German *talmid chacham* from the early 19th century, offers the following approach to understand Moshe's actions.

וזה הפירוש ששמעתי מפי המנוח החכם ברנייס נ"ע: הנה הגיעו עתה לגבול הארץ המובטחת ועידן חדש נפתח בפניהם. מכאן ואילך יחדלו הניסים הגלויים של המדבר ובמקומם עתידים לבוא הניסים הנסתרים שהנהגת ה' מסתרת בהם. נס זה נועד להיות המעבר אל ההנהגה הזאת, וזה הדבר שהוא נועד להורות: במקום מטה משה במדבר יבוא דבר משה מעתה ועד עולם. ...

The following interpretation I heard from the late lamented Chacham Bernays: Just now they reached the border of the promised Land and a new era awaited them. The visible miracles of the wilderness were henceforth to be replaced by the invisible but just as close guidance of God through נסים נסתרים. This miracle was meant to be the transition to this new mode of guidance, and it was meant to teach the following: the staff of Moshe in the wilderness was to be replaced by the word of Moshe, henceforth and forever...

The **Netziv**, in his introduction to Sefer Bamidbar, also suggests that *Mei Meriva* has to be viewed from the perspective of when it occurred. He proposes that the book of Bamidbar is one of transition—a transition from the time when the Jewish people entered the *midbar* to the time [4 decades later] when they are about to enter *Eretz Yisroel*. This was a transition from a state of *l'malah min ha-tevah*--from *mahn*, the *be'air* and the clouds of glory--to a state of *tevah*, a natural world of man working the land and depending upon rain for his water supply. It was also a transition from a people who had been slaves in Egypt to a new generation that would enter Eretz Yisrael.

העמק דבר במדבר פתיחה: משום דעיקר זה הספר הוא המחליף ומשנה הליכות עם ה' בחיי העולם מאז שהגיעו לארץ ישראל. מן הדרך שהלכו במדבר. שבמדבר היו מתנהגים במדת תפארת שהלך לימין משה שהוא לגמרי למעלה מהליכות הטבע. ובארץ ישראל הלכו בדרך הטבע בסתרי השגחת מלכות שמים ב"ה. וזה השנוי התחיל עודם במדבר בשנת הארבעים כמו שביארנו בפרשת חקת.

It is for this reason, explains the Netziv, that 39 years prior to *Mei Meriva*, at *Massah U'Merivah* (Shemos 17:1-7) Hashem actually did instruct Moshe to hit the rock.

שמות פרק יז: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְמֹשֶׁה וְיָצֵא מַטֵּן מִמֶּנּוּ מִים וְשָׁתָה הָעָם וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

I will be standing there before you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock and water will issue from it, and the people will drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

The *mateh*--Moshe's staff--represents a miraculous existence. We recount at the Pesach *seder* the verse from Parshas Ki Savo (26:8) "Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand ... with signs and with wonders." The *haggadah* explains - "*osos, zu hamateh* - 'signs' refers to the staff of Moshe." Thus, at the infancy of the Jewish nation, as they left Egypt as a free people, the relationship between Hashem and the former slaves was supernatural.

Now, as they are about to enter *Eretz Yisroel*, it was a new generation, and Hashem wanted to teach them how to live in the natural world, the real world of Eretz Yisrael, and to live according to the natural order. He wanted to teach them the proper procedure of *tefilla*, in case of a drought, as they were experiencing. This approach was codified in the *mishna* (Ta'anis 2:1), which teaches that, in case of a severe drought, the people should take out the holy ark to the

town square, and the elders should preach words to inspire the people to pray, to beseech God to bring rain.

The Netziv suggests that speaking to the rock was supposed to be a session of prayer—similar to the process of prayer in times of drought. This was to be the **new** method, the **new** relationship between the nation and Hashem, that would be their new reality in Eretz Yisrael. Moshe, however, did not use this new approach as he was instructed to do. Instead, he relied upon the former method of hitting the rock.

By doing so, Moshe demonstrated that he had not adapted to this new reality and to the new character of this generation entering a new land, a generation who needed a fresh approach for a fresh era in their history.

From this perspective, God's denial of Moshe's fervent wish to lead the Jewish people into the Promised Land should not be understood as a punishment. Rather, when Moshe hit the rock this time, as he had done 39 years before, God recognized that Moshe would not be an appropriate leader for them at this new stage of their journey.

This was because he viewed the second generation through the same lens through which he viewed the first.

העמק דבר במדבר פרק כ: לכן לא תביאו וגו'. לא היה העונש שימותו במדבר, שאם כן לא היה משה מתפלל להחל שבועת ה', אלא הגזירה היה מדה במדה, שבשביל שלא הראו לישראל הדרך להתנהג בארץ ישראל בעת עצירת גשמים וכדומה, על כן לא תביאו וגו'. ובמקום אחר כתיב על אשר מעלתם בי, מעילה הוא שנוי בדבר ה' כמש"כ בספר ויקרא כ"ו מ', והכונה כאן שעשה משה נס ושנוי בהליכות הטבע בעת שלא היה הרצון בכך, וזה נקרא מעילה, כמו שנענש רבא בעת שעשה נס שלא ברצון ה' כדאיתא בתענית פרק ג' [כ"ד ב'], והיה נזוף מחמת זה כדאיתא בחולין דף קל"ג א':

The Torah instructs us to learn from history—to study the past and apply its lessons to our present. The *pasuk* in Parshas Ha'azinu says, "Remember the days of old; understand the years of each generation."

שם משמואל: זכור ימות עולם בינו שנות דור ודור נראה לפרש עפ"י דברי אבן עזרא דשם שנה נגזר מלשון שינוי. The **Shem Mishmuel** cites the **Ibn Ezra's** explanation for "*binu shnos dor v'dor*." The Ibn Ezra explains that the word *shnos* is derived from the word *shinui* [meaning difference]. A leader must understand history in the context of the changes from one generation to the next, and never blindly apply the rules that worked in the past to the present situation. We must understand that each generation is different. We should not say "That's the way it was; therefore, that's the way it has to be." *Zechor yemos olam*--learn the lesson of history, but *binu shnos dor v'dor*--bear in mind the changes from generation to generation. Times change, people change, and circumstances change. There are many times when we must not merely go with what was, but we must adjust and redirect for the current generation to meet its needs...

In the Gemara, a debate or question is often left unresolved and the Gemara says תיקו, commonly understood as Eliyahu haNavi will answer. **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev** asks why Eliyahu haNavi was the one designated to resolve all of the Talmud's *teykus* and not Moshe Rabbeinu, David haMelech, or Rabbi Akiva? The reason, he suggests, is because, according to tradition, Eliyahu never died—he has been around in all generations. To answer questions properly, to apply the *mesorah* effectively, we need someone who has an understanding of each generation, who can apply the values of absolute truth to the current circumstances. Therefore, only Eliyahu haNavi, who has been present during all generations, is qualified to resolve all the *teykus*.

קדושת לוי ליקוטים:תיקון. הראשי תיבות ת'שבי י'תרץ ק'ושיות ו'אבעיות. ובהשקפה ראשונה יש לדקדק, הא זה יהיה הכל אחר ביאת הגואל במהרה בימינו אמן, ולמה יתרץ אליהו הקושיות והאבעיות, הא יעמוד משה רבינו שנתן לנו התורה והמצוה, ולמה לא יתרץ הוא הקושיות והאבעיות. ונראה, דהנה כתוב בספר הדורות בהפולוגתא דרש"י ורבינו תם עם התפילין, דרש"י ז"ל היה משה רבינו בסייעתו, והר"ת לא השגיח על זה, ואמר לו שכבר נתן לנו התורה, ובידינו להורות כפי הוראות שכלינו בהתורה הקדושה. והנה מי יכול להבחין זאת באיזה מדה צריך זה העולם להתנהג שיופסק הלכה כמותו, מי שהוא בחיים והוא בזה העולם הוא יודע באיזה מדה צריך זה העולם להתנהג, אבל מי שאינו חי אינו יודע כלל באיזה מדה צריך זה העולם להתנהג בו, והנה אליהו הוא חי וקיים (תרגום יונתן במדבר כה, יב; זוה"ק ח"ג ריד, א) ולא טעם טעם מיתה והוא תמיד בזה העולם, ולכך הוא יפשוט הקושיות ואבעיות, כי הוא יודע באיזה מדה צריך העולם להתנהג. ובזה יובן מה שאמר ר"ת למשה רבינו ע"ה שכבר נתן לנו התורה ובידינו להורות:

Rabbi Berel Wein writes the following about the *Mei Meriva*: *"In our always-uncertain world, it is natural to crave security and stability. Financial planners, estate planners, insurance experts and politicians in office all attempt to convince us that the way it is now is how it will be in the future as well. However, all of us in our secret hearts know that the only thing certain about the future is that it will not be the same as the present. Therefore, we should be prepared to be open to new circumstances, to a constantly changing world. We should not be afraid to try out new technology, new ideas and theories, to change careers and pursue our true interests and goals. There is an innate longing for greatness within all of us. That longing can never be fulfilled without a willingness to change, improve and try something new."*

Like Moses and the rock, our ability to adjust and customize our approach – while remaining true to Torah standards – will in large part determine how successfully we move our children, our students, our nation and ourselves forward into the "Land of Israel" – into the next exciting stage of personal and national destiny.

Like the *para aduma*, the incident at Mei Meriva shows us that context is everything. What is right for one generation—what purifies one generation—could be disastrous for the next generation. What is the right path for one person may not be correct for someone else. What is right today, might be obsolete tomorrow. The Torah gives us the tools to adapt immutable truth and its unchanging principles suitably to changing circumstances.

As **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** wrote in [Creativity and Innovation in Halakha](#):

“Halakhic innovation is essentially ...preservative. It aims, in the first place, at ensuring a strict identity of Torah through time, and second, at preserving Torah as law, which is to say, as the code which governs the behavior of the Jewish people.

But, adaptation and change need to be done carefully and judiciously, as **Rav Soloveitchik** said in a speech in 1975 to RIETS rabbinic alumni, our *mesorah* must be kept intact:

“... we must not yield. . . In my opinion, [Judaism] does not have to apologize either . . . to the modern representatives of religious subjectivism. There is no need for apology — we should have pride in our mesorah, in our heritage. And of course, certainly it goes without saying, one must not try to compromise with these cultural trends, and one must not try to gear the halakhic norm to the transient ways of a neurotic society, [which] is what our society is.”

In short: Our job is to take the Torah’s timeless and immutable values and principles, and to apply them to our own lives, and to make them relevant and meaningful for our times.

May we merit to do this and soon see the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash... *bimhera viyamenu...amen.*