

Parshas Chukas

July 12, 2019

A Taste of Torah Just Do It

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

This week's parsha records the famed episode of Moshe hitting the rock. The Torah relates that the Jews arrived at the Desert of Tzin in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died and was buried there. Afterwards, the Torah continues that there was no water to drink and everyone gathered around Moshe and Aharon to complain. The Talmud (Ta'anis 9a) derives from here that all the forty years in the desert, they had a well in the merit of Miriam. Following her death, the well disappeared and the Jews had no water.

Hashem instructed Moshe to take his staff, gather everyone and speak to the rock before their eyes, and it would give water. The Torah states (Chukas 20:11), "Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice." Rashi explains the order of events that took place. Initially, Moshe spoke to the rock, as Hashem had commanded. But he mistakenly spoke to the wrong rock and no water came out. So he hit the rock and a few drops came out. Then he hit it a second time and water came gushing forth. Since Moshe deviated from Hashem's command, he was punished, as the Torah states (Chukas 20:12), "Because you did not believe in me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Jews, you will not bring them into the land I have given them."

The commentators are bothered by the fact that Moshe apparently had already lost the opportunity to enter the Land. Long before, Hashem had commanded Moshe to speak to Pharaoh to send the Jews out of

Egypt. Pharaoh, upset that Moshe was distracting the Jews from their work, increased their workload by not providing them with straw. Moshe returned to Hashem and said, "Why have You done evil to this People? Why have You sent Me?" (Shemos 5:22) Hashem responded "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh, for through a strong hand will he send them out, and through a strong hand will he drive them from the land." (ibid. 6:1) Rashi, citing the Talmud (Sanhedrin 111a), explains that this statement implied a punishment for questioning Hashem. The verse is interpreted to mean that Moshe would witness the battle against Pharaoh but not the war against the thirty-one kings of Canaan when the Jewish People would conquer the Land of Canaan.

Rabbi Leib Bakst (1915-2003) explains that there is no contradiction. Moshe's mistakes in both of these episodes were a result of one underlying issue: Moshe, as the leader of the Jewish People and the messenger of Hashem, should have accepted the missions Hashem gave him without questioning the results. Since Moshe questioned Hashem by the episode of Pharaoh and deviated from Hashem's command by the episode of the water, his full, perfect acceptance of his mission was found to be lacking.

Moshe was therefore punished that he would not be the one to lead the Jewish People into the Land of Israel. We have little comprehension of the supernal level of Moshe, and

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Stories for the Soul

No Need to Be Shattered

A very expensive crystal vase broke in the home of Rabbi Efraim Zalman Margulies (1762-1828), better known eponymously as the Bais Efraim, the name of his most famous work, a commentary on Shulchan Aruch. His wife was quite upset, but Rabbi Margulies remained calm.

"How can you be so relaxed?" demanded his wife. "Don't you realize how much that vase costs?"

"I can't answer you now," replied Rabbi Margulies, "but ask me again in a year, and I will explain it to you."

She didn't forget. Exactly a year later, she asked her husband for an explanation.

"Does it still bother you that the vase shattered?" he asked her.

"So many things happened since then," she replied. "To tell the truth, I've almost forgotten the entire episode."

"Your father chose me to be his son-in-law," explained Rabbi Margulies, "because he said that I am an *ihuy* (genius). I am able to grasp in a moment what others need a year to comprehend. I knew that the broken bottle wouldn't bother me in a year's time, so I didn't let it bother me then either."

Moshe was taken to task for showing anger at *Mei Merivah* (the Waters of Strife). Often, when one gets upset, it is about something that will not mean much later – but that moment of anger can, indeed, have lasting repercussions.

Kollel Happenings

SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM

Attention bachurim in Denver over the summer! The Kollel is once again holding its Summer Night Seder for Bachurim at the Kollel West Denver Bais Medrash. Sunday-Thursday. Night seder begins at 8 pm, with ma'ariv at 9:10 pm. Stipends available for boys who maintain the sederim. For further details, info or sponsorship opportunities, please contact rmf@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: When does the text of a *bracha* (blessing) change slightly due to the situation, not the calendar date?

A: When one separates a piece of dough to fulfill the mitzva of challa, the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 338:1) and commentaries cite three customs as to the proper wording of the *bracha*: *lihafrish teruma*, *lihafrish challah*, or a combination of both. The prevalent Ashkenazic custom is to recite "*lihafrish challah min ha'isah*," "to separate challah from the dough." There are, though, instances when we don't fulfill this mitzva until after the baking. Examples of this are

when dealing with a batter, matzah baking or if one forgot to fulfill the mitzva before the baking. According to many halachic authorities, in these scenarios, the two final words of the *bracha* ("*min ha'isah*," "from the dough") are understandably omitted. Source: Challa Kihilchisa pg. 256

This week's question: Generally, a *bracha* (blessing) is recited prior to the performance of a mitzvah. Sometimes, a *bracha* is recited after the performance of the mitzvah. Where do we find the recital of a *bracha* after a mitzva in addition to the *bracha* beforehand?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part X

Local Jewish papers published news of the victory, and calls poured in from across the country asking for assistance in dealing with similar challenges.

In 1929, Rabbi Silver was appointed president of the Agudas Harabanim, the largest organization of American Orthodox rabbis at that time.

In 1931, Rabbi Silver, as president of the Agudas Harabanim, visited the city of Cincinnati. The Orthodox community there was riven by politics and in-fighting, controversy that was sufficient to drive the previous two chief rabbis from the position. Rabbi Silver was asked to assess the situation and recommend what could be done

to help the community right the ship and move forward. Rabbi Silver wrote a list of recommendations, including that the community find someone who would be a strong, unifying leader in the city. A search committee was formed, but it decided that the most suitable person for the position was none other than Rabbi Silver himself.

The community offered Rabbi Silver the position of chief rabbi of Cincinnati. Around this time, Rabbi Silver had embarked upon a project to create a day school system for Springfield. However, he encountered strong opposition from the community.

A Taste of Torah

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we certainly cannot fully understand the depths of the ways of Hashem. Nonetheless, since the Torah recorded these episodes and the punishment given to Moshe, we can take a lesson

into our own lives that, while we may not see the desired or expected results from fulfilling Hashem's will, we must stay the course and do our best to keep His Torah.

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