

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT CUKKAT

DVAR TORAH: TZADIKIM & THE PARAH ADUMAH

Rav Itzeleh of Ponevezh, 1918-1854) זצ"ל, Lithuania, quoted in Pninim Mishulchan Gavohah), asks a simple question about one of Rashi's comments on this week's parshah. Rashi (Bamidbar 20:1), quoting Rabbi Ami (Moed Katan 28a), asks why the death of Miriam is juxtaposed to the laws of the Parah Adumah – the Red Heifer – in the Torah, and answers: "Just as sacrifices atone, so do the deaths of tzadikim." Rav Itzeleh asks: Why does the Torah choose this sacrifice to teach this lesson? There are many other sacrifices that atone. Furthermore, the Red Heifer is somewhat of a non-standard sacrifice – it is offered outside the Beit Hamikdash, and is used to purify one who has come in contact with the dead, not to atone his sin.

He answers that there is a parallel between the ashes of the Parah Adumah and the legacy of great tzadikim.

The Parah Adumah's ashes were divided into three. One third was kept on the periphery of the Temple complex in a section called the חיל. The second was kept on the Mount of Olives, and the third was divided up among the shifts of Kohanim.

Each third served a different function. One third was kept as a משמרת, preserved for posterity (based on Bamidbar 19:9); a second was reserved for Kohanim to purify themselves; and the rest was for all of Israel (Rambam differs with others about which of these last two were used for Kohanim and which for all of Israel).

Corresponding to the Parah Adumah's ashes, said Rav Itzeleh, after great tzadikim pass away we can distinguish three things they leave behind. 1) Their neshamot, their lofty souls, are hidden underneath the Heavenly Throne of Glory, the כסא הכבוד. The tzadik's soul is "bound up with the bound of eternal life" (Shmuel I 25:29). 2) The tzadik also leaves behind deep Torah teachings, but they can only be accessed by the Kohen-like Jews, the learned talmidei chachamim and rabbanim. 3) But they leave over a third legacy that anyone can access, their character traits, מדות. Everyone can in some way learn from the lives of these great people and try to use them as role models for personal improvement. Just as the one who was in contact with the dead becomes purified through the ashes of the Parah Adumah, so one who accesses the legacy of tzadikim, their Torah or middot, becomes transformed.

This brings out another difference between the Parah Adumah and other sacrifices, making it the preferred analogy to the death of tzadikim. Other atonement sacrifices must be brought by the Israelite, but the rest of the work is done by the Kohanim. It is the Kohanim who sprinkle the blood on the altar and eat the sacrificial meat: "The Kohanim eat and the owner gets atonement" (Yoma 68b). But in order for the Parah Adumah to be effective, there is still work to be done by the Israelite. He must get sprinkled by the Parah Adumah ashes mixed with water. The atonement brought about by the tzadik's passing, says Rav Itzeleh, requires work by the rest of the Jewish people. All must now take from his character traits and learn from his actions – and, if possible, learn from the Torah left over in this world.

SOURCE GUIDE: MOSHE, AHARON, AND MIRIAM

Miriam the prophetess passes away in this week's parshah, as does Aharon her brother. This source guide looks at a verse in the book of Michah where G-d says He sent the three children of Amram and Yocheved – Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam – to lead the Jewish people through the desert. The sources below expand on what Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam's respective roles were in that threesome.

Here is the verse in Michah:

<p>1. Michah 6:4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage and sent before you Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam.</p>	<p>מיכה ו:ד כִּי הֵעֲלֵיתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּמִבֵּית עַבְדִּים פְּדִיתִיךָ וְאָשְׁלַח לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת מֹשֶׁה אֶהְרֹן וּמִרְיָם.</p>
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G-d sent three great siblings to lead the people of Israel through the desert – Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam.

A. The Targum: 3 Missions

The Targum on that verse describes each of their missions:

<p>2. Targum Yonatan on Michah 6:4 For I took you out of the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage, and I sent before you three prophets: Moshe to teach and give over the laws; Aharon to atone for the nation; and Miriam to guide the women.</p>	<p>תרגום יונתן על מיכה פרק ו פסוק ד ארי אסיקתך מארעא דמצרים ומבית עבדותא פרקתך ושלחית קדמך תלתא נביין משה לאלפא מסירת דינין אהרן לכפרא על עמא ומרים לאוראה לנשיא:</p>
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Moshe received the Torah and taught it to Israel, Aharon the Kohen Gadol offered sacrifices that atoned for the people, and Miriam guided the women. We see an example of Miriam leading the women at the Yam Suf, leading the women in song and dance after the splitting of the Sea:

<p>3. Shemot 15:20-21 (20) Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aharon, took the drum in her hand, and all the women went out after her with drums and dancing. (21) She called out to them, "Sing out to Hashem for he is very lofty; horse and rider were cast into the sea."</p>	<p>ספר שמות פרק טו:כ-כא (כ) ותקח מרים הנביאה אֶחָת אֶהְרֹן אֶת הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵאֵן כָּל הַנְּשִׂיִם אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתַפִּים וּבְמַחֲלָה. (כא) וַתִּצַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירָו לַה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָקְמָה בַיָּם.</p>
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B. Gemara: 3 Merits

The Gemara teaches us that in the merit of each one of the 3 siblings Israel had miraculous Divine assistance:

<p>4. Taanit 9a Rabbi Yossi son of Rabbi Yehudah says: Three great leaders stood for Israel. They are Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. And there were great good presents that were given through them. They are the well, the cloud, and the manna. The well was in the merit of Miriam; the cloud in the merit of Aharon, and the manna in the merit of Moshe.</p>	<p>תענית ט. רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר: שלשה פרנסים טובים עמדו לישראל. אלו הן – משה ואהרן ומרים. ושלש מתנות טובות ניתנו על ידם, ואלו הן – באר וענן ומן. באר בזכות מרים, עמוד ענן בזכות אהרן, מן בזכות משה.</p>
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The Gemara goes on to prove its point by showing how when each one of them left the world the miraculous Divine assistance that came in their merit disappeared. When Miriam died the nation thirsted for water because the miraculous waters she brought for the entire people ceased. They were only restored through G-d's special instructions to Moshe and Aharon at the rock. When Aharon died the clouds disappeared and were only later restored through Moshe's merit; but when Moshe passed away all three of them were removed.

B. Kli Yakar: 3 Pillars

The Kli Yakar teaches us that each one of the three excelled was associated with one of the three pillars that support the world: Torah, avodah – service of G-d – and gemillut chasadim – lovingkindness.

<p>5. Kli Yakar on Shemot 17:8 The manna is in the merit of Moshe, for the Torah was only given to those who ate the manna (Tanchuma Beshalach 20). The well, which supplied them with their needs, was in the merit of Miriam, who supplied food to the children in Egypt, as it says, "They kept the children alive" (Shemot 1:18). And the clouds of glory were in the merit of Aharon, who was involved in the sacrificial service that caused the Divine Presence to rest in Israel, "and the cloud of G-d was upon the Mishkan" (40:38).</p>	<p>כלי יקר על שמות יז:ח מן בזכות משה, כי לא נתנה התורה כ"א לאוכלי המן, והבאר שהיתה מספקת להם כל צרכם, בזכות מרים שהיתה מספקת מזון לילדים, שנאמר ותחיין את הילדים, וענני כבוד בזכות אהרן, שהיה עסוק בעבודת הקרבנות שהיו גורמים שתשרה שכינה בישראל וענן ה' על המשכן."</p>
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Yocheved and her daughter Miriam are identified with Shifrah and Puah (Shemot 1:15), the Jewish midwives, who defied Pharaoh's command to kill the Jewish male babies and, instead, delivered babies and took care of them. G-d rewards them by "making for them houses" (Shemot 1:21). What are these "houses"?

<p>6. Rashi on Shemot 1:21 He made for them houses – houses of Kehunah and Leviah and royalty, that the Tanach refers to as 'houses.' "He built the house of G-d and the house of the king" (Melachim I 9:1). Kehunah and Leviah came from Yocheved (whose children were Moshe and Aharon) and royalty from Miriam (who, the Gemara shows, married Kalev ben Yefunah of the tribe of Yehudah and was an ancestor of King David), as it says in Sotah 11b.</p>	<p>רש"י על שמות א:כא ויעש להם בתים - בתי כהונה ולויה ומלכות שקרויין בתים. ויבן את בית ה' ואת בית המלך. כהונה ולויה מיוכבד. ומלכות ממרים כדאיתא במס' סוטה (יא:).</p>
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The Jewish people are led by a prophet, a Kohen Gadol, and by a king. The prophet is the pillar of Torah; the Kohen Gadol is the pillar of avodah; and the king, who cares for the nation's physical welfare is the pillar of gemillut chasadim. Miriam, the pillar of chesed, is the ancestor of the kings of Israel. Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam are each connected to one of the three pillars the world stands on.

B. Maharal: 3 Elements

The Maharal describes how through these three pillars we connect all of existence to G-d. The Sefer Yetzirah, the Book of Creation, speaks of four core elements of Creation. 3 out of 4, spirit (wind), fire, and water, correspond to the "3 pillars":

<p>7. Maharal – Derech Chaim 1:2 Through these 3 we connect up with Him, may He be blessed, who is the foundation of all; and through this the world stands, continuing to exist through Him. For the Torah is the spirit (רוח) of wisdom and understanding. Service is the element of fire (אש), for service is always referred to as "My sacrifice, My 'bread', as My fire" (Bamidbar 28:2). And lovingkindness is the element of water (מים), as it is written, "Cast your bread upon the waters for in many days you will find it" (Kohelet 11:1), and it is written "Fortunate are those who sow on all water" (Yishayahu 32:20), and this verse was understood by our sages as referring to doing chesed, (see Bava Kamma 17a) ... It is well known that one who does chesed creates a flow towards another much like the way water flows.</p> <p>Therefore he said that the world stands on three things, for this world (olam hazeh) is based on the three elements we mentioned. Through these three things it connects up to Him, may He be blessed. For the element of spirit connects up with Torah, which is spirit; and the element of water has a connection with doing chesed, which is the associated with water; and the element of fire is connected with service, which is fire. These three things each connect with one of the three fundamental elements of the world (as we explained above), and connect them with G-d – for Torah, service, and doing chesed each have a connection with G-d. In this way everything is connected with G-d, certainly making them foundations of the world.</p>	<p>מהר"ל – דרך חיים א:ב ... ע"י אלו ג' דברים מתקשרים בו ית' אשר הוא יסוד הכל ובוזה העולם עומד בקיומו בו ית', כי התורה היא רוח חכמה ובינה. העבודה היא האש שהרי כך נקרא העבודה בכל מקום קרבני לחמי לאשי, ... וגמילות חסדים היא מדת המים דכתיב (קהלת י"א) שלח לחמך על פני המים כי ברוב הימים תמצאנו, וכתיב (ישעי' לב) אשרי זורעי על כל מים שדרשו זה על גמילות חסדים כמ"ש ז"ל במס' ב"ק בפ"ק (י"ז ע"א) ... ודבר ידוע הוא זה כי בעל חסד משפיע לאחר כמו המים המשפיעים.</p> <p>ולפיכך אמר על ג' דברים העולם עומד, כי העוה"ז אשר הוא מיוסד על ג' יסודות אשר זכרנו, מתקשר בו יתברך ע"י אלו ג' דברים, כי יש ליסוד הרוח קשור בתורה שהיא רוח, ויסוד המים יש לו קשור בגמילות חסדים שהוא מדת המים, ויסוד האש יש לו קשור בעבודה שהיא אש, וע"י אלו ג' דברים אשר כל אחד מן ג' יסודות העולם יש לו קשור באחד מהם כמ"ש יש להם קשור עם הש"י, כי התורה והעבודה וגמילות חסדים יש להם קשור עם הש"י עד שהכל מקושר בו יתברך, ולפיכך אלו ג' דברים הם עמודי העולם בודאי.</p>
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Uniting the ideas of the Kli Yakar and the Maharal: Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam were not only G-d's messengers to lead Israel, but also to connect all of existence with G-d.

COMPLETE SERVICE BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

'A job well done' – everyone wants to hear this. Aharon's final act as Kohen Gadol teaches us what to strive for. Before surrendering his soul blissfully to Hashem Aharon transfers his garments to his son, thus handing over the office of Kohen Gadol. Hashem instructs Moshe, "קח את אהרן" – "Take Aharon and Elazar his son and bring them up to Mount Hor, and strip Aharon of his vestments and dress Elazar his son in them. And Aharon shall be gathered in and die there" (Bamidbar 20:25-26).

The midrash asks a surprisingly technical question at this emotional time. The Torah prohibits all Jews from wearing shaatnez, a mixture of wool and linen. The Torah also commands that the garments worn by the Kohanim contain a wool and linen blend. The Kohen's wearing of the garments overrides the prohibition against wearing shaatnez as long as he's involved in his avodah, performing his duties. But, asks the midrash, how can Aharon wear the garments of the Kohen when he leaves the precincts of the Mishkan to ascend Mount Hor? Won't he then be guilty of wearing forbidden shaatnez?

The midrash could have answered that Hashem makes the rules; if he permits Aharon to wear shaatnez in the Mishkan he can permit him to wear shaatnez on Mount Hor. Instead, what the midrash says is even more profound.

The phrase "קח את אהרן" – "Take Aharon" – is used only one other time, when Aharon was first appointed Kohen Gadol. קח את אהרן brought him to his avodah, and now it brings him to the end of his avodah. As the midrash commentary Imrei Yosher explains, the transfer of Aharon's office of Kohen Gadol to his son is itself an integral part of his office. When he assured that his avodah was handed over to the next generation Aharon's avodah was complete.

Our avodat Hashem as well, in learning Torah, in gemilut chasadim, in tefillah obliges us to do all we can to ensure that the next generation will continue in the values of Torah.

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Eliezer ben Sara, ז"ל

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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