

חֻקַּת
Hukkat

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מָה בְּפָרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- The ashes of a פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה (parah adumah, red cow) can purify anyone who becomes טָמֵא (tamei, impure) through contact with a dead body.
- Miriam dies.
- Benei Yisrael complain about not having water. God tells Moshe and Aharon to take a staff and speak to a rock to get water for the people. Moshe hits the rock twice with the staff, and it gushes water.
- God tells Moshe and Aharon, "Because you failed to sanctify Me, you will not enter the Land of Israel."
- God says it's time for Aharon to die. Moshe takes Aharon and his son Elazar to the top of a mountain. The special כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל (Kohen Gadol, High Priest) garments are taken off Aharon and placed on Elazar, and Aharon dies. Benei Yisrael mourn for 30 days.
- Benei Yisrael complain again about not having enough food and water. God sends deadly snakes. God tells Moshe to create a copper snake and put it up on a pole. Whoever looks at this is healed.
- The armies of Sihon and Og fight against Benei Yisrael, and Benei Yisrael win.



מִדְרָש • Midrash

There's a short song about a well in our parashah. This song has almost the same opening line as שִׁירַת הַיָּם (Shirat Ha-Yam, the Song of the Sea), which Benei Yisrael sang after crossing the יַם סוּף (Yam Suf, Reed Sea).

In our parashah

במדבר כא:יז

אָז יָשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת
עֲלִי בְאֵר עֱנוּ־לָהּ:

Bemidbar 21:17

Then Israel sang this song:
Spring up, O well—sing to it.

שמות טו:א

אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה
הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אָשִׁירָה לַה'
כִּי גָאֹה גָּאָה...

Shemot 15:1

Then Moshe and Benei Yisrael sang this song to God. They said:
I will sing to God, Who is highly exalted...

In Parashat Beshallah

- What's different about the two pesukim? Who is missing from the song in our parashah?

מדרש תנחומא חקת בא

מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא נִזְכַּר מֹשֶׁה שָׁם? מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנֶּעֱנַשׁ עַל הַמַּיִם, וְאֵין אָדָם מְקַלֵּס לִסְפֶּקְלָטוֹר שֶׁלּוֹ.

וְלָמָּה שְׁמוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לֹא נִזְכַּר בָּהּ?

מָשָׁל לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמֶה? לְשִׁלְטוֹן שֶׁעָשָׂה סְעוּדָה לַמֶּלֶךְ. אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, פְּלוֹנִי אוֹהֲבִי יֵשׁ שָׁם? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: לָאו. אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, אַף אֲנִי אֵינִי הוֹלֵךְ לְשָׁם.

אַף כָּאן אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, הוֹאִיל וּמֹשֶׁה אֵינוֹ נִזְכַּר, אַף אֲנִי אֵינִי נִזְכַּר שָׁם.

Midrash Tanhuma

Why is Moshe not mentioned there (in the song about the well)? Since he was punished because of water; and no one praises their executioner.

And why is the name of the Holy Blessed One not mentioned there? This can be understood through a mashal (parable). It's like a governor who made a banquet for the king. The king said, "Will my friend be there?" They told the king, "No." The king said, "Then I also am not going there."

Here too, the Holy Blessed One said, "Since Moshe is not mentioned in the song, I also will not be mentioned there."

- When was Moshe punished because of water? (Hint: See earlier in our parashah, Bemidbar 20:1–13.) How does that story explain why Moshe is not mentioned in a song about water?



- According to this midrash, why doesn't God want to be in the song? What does this tell us about God? What does this tell us about God's relationship with Moshe?
- What can this teach us about friendship? What can you do to be sensitive to people around you who are being left out?





דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: It makes more sense to hit a rock than to speak to a rock.



How to play:

- Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.





Agree!

- Maybe the rock is blocking a well or natural spring. Smashing it would free the water.
- It happened before! In Shemot 17:1-7, God tells Moshe to hit a rock with his staff to get water.
- In our parashah, God told Moshe to grab his staff (Bemidbar 20:8). So maybe Moshe thought you don't need a staff to speak to a rock; you need a staff to hit a rock.

Disagree!

- I've played with a lot of rocks and a lot of sticks, and I've never seen a stick that can break a rock.
- Neither talking nor hitting is logical. Either way, it's a miracle to get water out of a rock. What makes sense is to listen to God.

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שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשָּׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

aliyot:
1) Bemidbar 19:1 to 19:17
2) 19:18 to 20:6
3) 20:7 to 20:13
4) 20:14 to 20:21
5) 20:22 to 21:9
6) 21:10 to 21:20
7) 21:21 to 22:1

haftarah: Shoftim 11:1 to 11:33

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.

Good luck!

1. What cannot go on a פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה (parah adumah, red cow)?
2. What seems to disappear as soon as Miriam dies?



3. How many times does Moshe hit the rock?
4. What path does Moshe want to take?
5. What kind of a snake did God tell Moshe to make?
6. What book gets quoted?
7. What was the name of the place of the battle between Benei Yisrael and Og?
8. What place in the parashah shares its name with a part of the Pesah Seder?
9. After Aharon dies, who takes over as the כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל (kohen gadol, High Priest)?
10. **From the haftarah:** When Yiftah ran away, where did he go?



* Look for the answers on page 8!

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דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar

The ends of sentences are important stopping points, and we use our voices to emphasize them. Our voices usually go down at the end of a sentence. But when we're asking a question, our sentences end with our voices going up.

In the Tanakh, the middle and ends of sentences are also big stopping points—and sometimes we say words differently in these places. There are some great examples in our parashah. Sometimes a word usually has a segol (three dots in the shape of a triangle), but at a stopping point the vowel changes to a kamatz (like the letter T). See here:

וְדִבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־הַסֶּלַע — in the middle of a sentence

אֶל־פְּנֵי הַסֶּלַע — at a pause

בְּדַרְכּוֹ — in the middle of a sentence

בַּדֶּרֶךְ — at a pause

Words like עֶרֶב (erev) or קֶבֶר (kever) change into the words עָרֶב (arev) and קָבֶר (kaver). Check out how many times that happens in our parashah!

Sometimes, a word is usually spelled with a patah (like a dash) and it gets changed to a kamatz, like here:



וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם רַבִּים — in the middle of a sentence

נוֹצִיא לָכֶם מַיִם: — at a pause

בְּמִצְרַיִם — in the middle of a sentence

מִמִּצְרַיִם — at a pause

These versions of the words are called pausal forms, because they usually appear when there's a pause—like these bigger break points in or at the end of a sentence. Look and listen for them!

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מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Bemidbar 20:1-2

The people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there.

There was no water for the community...

במדבר כ:א-ב

וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם בְּקָדֵשׁ וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם:

וְלֹא הָיָה מַיִם לָעֵדָה...



What's the connection between Miriam's death and Benei Yisrael not having water?

Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are **bugged** by something unusual in the Torah text

Tosefta Sotah (Eretz Yisrael, 1,800 years ago)

While Miriam was alive, there was a well that gave water to Benei Israel.
When she died, what does it say? "There was no water for the community."

תוספתא סוטה יא:א

כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָיְתָה מִרְיָם קַיֶּמֶת הָיְתָה בְּאֵר מְסַפֶּקֶת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל. מִשֶּׁמֵּתָה מַהוּ אוֹמֵר? "וְלֹא הָיָה מַיִם לָעֵדָה."

What made Miriam so special that Benei Yisrael had water for 40 years in the מִדְבָּר (midbar, wilderness) just because of her?

Rabbeinu Bahaye (750 years ago)

The well existed thanks to Miriam's merit. She earned that when she watched over Moshe (when he was placed in the water as a baby), as it says, "His sister stood from afar (to watch over him)" (Shemot 2:4).

רבינו בחיי במדבר כ:ב

כִּי הָיָה הַבְּאֵר בִּזְכוּת מִרְיָם שֶׁהָיָה לָהּ זְכוּת הַמַּיִם מִמֹּשֶׁה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַתִּתַּצַּב אֲחוֹתוֹ מֵרָחוֹק (שמות ב).

According to Rabbeinu Bahaye, the miracle of having water in the desert was thanks to Miriam watching over baby Moshe when he was placed in the water.



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- What is the connection between these two events? How would Miriam watching over baby Moshe in the water deserve a miracle of God giving water to the people in the midbar?
- What was important about what Miriam did, according to this midrash? What can we learn from her?

Bemidbar Rabbah 1:2

The well was thanks to Miriam's merit, for she sang a song over the splitting of the sea, as it says: Miriam called out and said, "Sing to God!" (Shemot 15:21).

במדבר רבה א:ב

וְהַבְּאֵר בִּזְכוּת מִרְיָם, שֶׁאָמְרָה שִׁירָה עַל הַמַּיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַה' (שמות טו:בא).

According to this midrash, the miracle of the well was thanks to Miriam showing gratitude for the miracle of קְרִיעַת יַם סוּף (keriat yam suf, God splitting the sea, Shemot 14-15). She gathered the women with tambourines and dancing and got them all to sing to God.

- What is the connection between these two events? How would Miriam showing gratitude to God for keriat yam suf be deserving of a miracle of God giving water to the people in the midbar?
- What was important about what Miriam did, according to this midrash? What can we learn from her?



הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

Yiftah is a גִּבּוֹר חַיִל (gibbor hayil, strong warrior) who saves Benei Yisrael from בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן (Benei Ammon) in this week's haftarah.

Yiftah's half-brothers are not kind to him, so Yiftah runs away from their home in Gilad. A while later, Benei Ammon threaten to attack, so the leaders of Gilad come find Yiftah. They ask him to lead their fight against Ammon.

"Oh, so now you need me?!" Yiftah replies. "Don't you remember that you kicked me out of my home?" (Shoftim 11:7)

The leaders promise that if Yiftah leads the fight against Benei Ammon, then the people of Gilad will welcome him back and he'll become their commander.

Yiftah sends messengers to the king of Ammon to try to come to an agreement that will prevent war. The messengers retell the story from Parashat Hukkat, about how Benei Yisrael, when they were back in the wilderness, had asked Moav, Edom, and the Emori to let them pass through their land to try to avoid fighting.

The king of Ammon isn't willing to agree to peace (Shoftim 11:28). So Yiftah leads Benei Yisrael in war against Benei Ammon, and God makes Benei Yisrael victorious (Shoftim 11:32).

- Compare the story in our parashah (Bemidbar 20:14-20:21 and 21:21-22:1) to the way that Yiftah retells it (Shoftim 11:15-11:23). What do you notice? What's the same, and what's different?
- In both of these stories, why is peace the first thing Benei Yisrael try for before fighting? What can this teach us?

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. A yoke (19:2)
2. Water (20:1-2)
3. Twice (20:11)
4. The king's path (20:17)
5. A שָׂרָף (saraf, a snake that burns) (21:8)
6. סֵפֶר מִלְחֲמֹת ה' (Sefer Milhamot Hashem, The Book of the Wars of God) (21:14)
7. Edre'i (21:33)
8. Kadesh, where Miriam died (20:1)
9. His son, Elazar (20:25-28)
10. Eretz Tov (Shoftim 11:3)

