

NCYI Youth Groups Parshat Chukat

(http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh_TorahSummary.htm)

Parsha Outline

- The Parah Adumah (Red Heifer)
- The death of Moshe
- Moshe hits the rock
- Near war with Edom
- Aharon dies
- The war with Kenaan
- Snakes
- Confrontation with Sichon and Og

Parsha Summaries

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/388899/jewish/Chukat-Roundup.htm

Chukat Roundup

The Torah is not written in the order in which events happened, and this week's *parshah* jumps to the end of the Jews' forty years in the desert, the 38th year, to be exact. We begin by learning about a special mitzvah that enables a Jew who is *tameh*--impure-- to become pure again and thus be allowed in the *Mishkan*. This is the commandment of the *parah adumah*, the red cow. If someone becomes impure because of contact with a dead body, the ashes of the *parah adumah*, together with cedar wood, a branch of hyssop, and wool, can purify him.

When the People of Israel arrived in the desert of Zin, Miriam passed away, and the well of water that they had always had in her merit dried up. So the people had no water and complained to Moses. G-d told Moses to talk to the rock and tell it to bring forth water. But Moses instead hit the rock with his stick, and water gushed out. G-d then told Moses that because he did not follow his instructions exactly, he would not be able to go into the Land of Israel.

The Jews wanted to continue traveling towards Israel, so they sent messengers to the king of Edom asking him permission to pass through Edom's land, which was next in their route. The king responded that they may **not** travel through his land, and if they try to, he will come and kill everybody. The Jews said that they would not take any food or drink any water, they would just walk on the road so they could get to the other side, but the

king still said absolutely not. So the Jews had to take a longer route to get around the land of Edom.

G-d told Moses to take Aaron and his son Eliezer up a mountain called Mount Hor. There, Moses took Aaron's clothing and put it on Eliezer, and Aaron lay down and passed away. When the Jews saw Moses and Eliezer come down alone, they realized that Aaron had passed away, and everyone began to weep. They mourned for 30 days.

The extra long journey around the land of Edom discouraged the Jews, and they complained again to Moses. Poisonous snakes then attacked the camp, and G-d told Moses to put up a brass serpent high on a pole. Everyone who had been bitten and then saw Moses' brass serpent was then healed.

The Jews sing a song of thanks to G-d for the well that provided them with water in the desert.

Now the Jews reach another land that they have to pass through. So they send a message to Sihon, King of the Amorites, asking for permission to pass through his land. This time, Sihon did not just say no, he actually went out to war against the Jews. They fought back and won, gaining all of his three lands. Then Og, King of Bashan, came out to fight and the Jews won him too and conquered his land

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/528307/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm

Chukat Aliya Summary

General Overview: This week's Torah reading, *Chukat*, begins with a discussion regarding the laws of the red heifer. Miriam and Aaron die. When the Jews are in need of water, Moses strikes a rock – despite being commanded to talk to it. Waters stream forth, but Moses is banned from entering Israel. Amalek battles the Israelites and is defeated. Edom and Moab refuse the Israelites passageway to Israel. The Israelites battle Sichon and Og, and are victorious.

First Aliyah: The most severe of all ritual impurities is *tum'at met*, the impurity contracted through contact with a human corpse. This section details the purification process for an individual or object which has contracted this form of impurity. A red heifer is slaughtered and is burned together with a few added ingredients. Water from a stream is added to the ashes. On the third and seventh day after contracting *tum'at met*,

this mixture is sprinkled upon the individual or object. After immersion in a *mikvah* (ritual pool), the person or object is freed of this impurity.

Second Aliyah: The abovementioned purification process is continued, along with an admonition that the impure individual not enter the Tabernacle or Temple until the purification process is completed. Miriam dies in the fortieth year of the Israelites' sojourn in the desert. With Miriam's death, the waters which flowed from the miraculous "Well of Miriam" dried up. The people complain bitterly about the lack of water.

Third Aliyah: G-d tells Moses and Aaron to take a staff and gather the people in front of a certain rock. They should speak to the rock, and it will give forth water. Moses and Aaron gather everybody, and Moses strikes the rock and it gives forth water. In the course of this episode they committed a grave error, the conventional explanation being that they struck the rock instead of speaking to it. This caused G-d to punish Moses and Aaron, barring them from leading the Jews into Israel.

Fourth Aliyah: Moses sends messengers to the King of Edom requesting permission to pass through his land (which is south of Canaan) on the way to the Promised Land. Despite Moses' promises not to cause any harm to the land whilst passing, Edom refuses the Jews passage. The Jews are therefore forced to circumvent the land of Edom, and approach Canaan from the east.

Fifth Aliyah: The Jews arrive at Mount Hor. At G-d's command, Moses, Aaron and Aaron's son, Elazar, go up the mountain. Aaron removes his high priest's vestments and Elazar dons them. Aaron then passes away. The entire nation mourns Aaron's death for thirty days. The Amalekites, disguised as Canaanites, attack the Jews. The Jews pray to G-d and are victorious in battle. The Jews complain about their food, claiming that they are "disgusted" by the manna. G-d dispatches serpents into the Israelite encampment, and many Jews die. Moses prays to G-d on the Jews' behalf. Following G-d's instructions, Moses fashions a copper serpent and places it atop a pole. The bitten Jews would look at this snake and be healed.

Sixth Aliyah: The Jews journey on, making their way towards the eastern bank of the Jordan River. Encrypted in this section is a great miracle which occurred when the Jews passed through the Arnon valley. Tall cliffs rose from both sides of this narrow valley, and in the clefts of these cliffs the Emorites, armed with arrows and rocks, were waiting to ambush the Jews. Miraculously, the mountains moved towards each other, crushing the Emorite guerrilla forces. This section ends with a song of praise for the well which sustained the Jews throughout their desert stay -- and whose now-bloodied waters made the Jews aware of the great miracle which G-d wrought on their behalf.

Seventh Aliyah: The Jews approach the land of the Emorites, which lies on the east bank of the Jordan River. They send a message to Sichon, king of the Emorites, asking permission to pass through his land en route to Canaan. Sichon refuses and instead masses his armies and attack the Jews. The Jews are victorious and occupy the Emorite lands. Og, king of Bashan, then attacks the Jews. The Jews are triumphant again; they kill Og and occupy his land too. Now the Jewish nation has reached the bank of the Jordan River, just across from the city of Jericho in the land of Israel.

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/3567>

The laws of the *para aduma* the red heifer are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. G-d commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of G-d's mastery over the worldh, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, G-d tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. *Bnei Yisrael* resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him 30 days. Sichon the Amorite attacks *Bnei Yisrael* when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

Parsha Songs

[The lyrics are supplied here. For the tunes, please click on the link]

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/573765/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm

Lyrics:

This was taught to the Jewish nation
A chok is a law with no explanation
Even though we don't understand
We observe Hashem's commands

The parah adumah, a special red cow
Was brought as a korban the kohen knew how
Its ashes were used on a person tamei
Then the kohen cleansed himself in a special way

For forty years the Jews roamed
Soon they would reach their land their home
The water stopped flowing when Miriam died
We have no more water the people cried

Hashem said your faith in me you'll show
Speak to the rock and the water will flow
But Moshe hit the rock instead
You won't enter Eretz Yisroel Hashem said

Parsha Questions & Answers

Selected from the following websites:

http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=7077

http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=5040

http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=1675

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1748>

The following are a selection of questions obtained from the above mentioned websites.

K-2

Questions

1. What is a chok?
2. What is a parah adumah?
3. Who did the parah adumah make tahor?
4. Which righteous woman died in this week's parsha?
5. What miracle in the desert happened in her zechut?
6. What did the Bnei Yisrael complain about?
7. What was Moshe supposed to do by the rock and what did he actually do?
8. What punishment did Moshe receive for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it?
9. Who died by Hor Hahar?
10. Why were the Bnei Yisrael so sad that Aharon died?

Answers

1. A Mitzvah that we don't understand it's reasoning
2. A red cow (that has never worked and has nothing wrong with it)
3. Someone who was tameh lamet (who touched or was in a house with a dead body)
4. Miriam
5. The Be'er (well)
6. That there was no water to drink
7. He was supposed to speak to the rock but instead he hit it
8. He had to die in the Midbar and did not get to enter Eretz Yisrael
9. Aharon
10. Because he was ohev shalo verodef shalom – he ran to make peace

3-4

Questions

1. What is a chok?
2. What is a parah adumah?
3. Who did the parah adumah make tahor?
4. What happened to the kohen who prepared the Parah Adumah?
5. Which righteous woman died in this week's parsha?
6. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of para adumah?
7. What miracle in the desert happened in her zechut?
8. What did the Bnei Yisrael complain about?
9. What was Moshe supposed to do by the rock?
10. What did Moshe actually do?
11. What punishment did Moshe receive for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it?
12. Who died by Hor Hahar?
13. How long did they mourn for Aharon?
14. Which miracle disappeared when Aharon died?
15. Why were the Bnei Yisrael so sad that Aharon died?

Answers

1. A Mitzvah that we don't understand it's reasoning
2. A red cow (that has never worked and has nothing wrong with it)
3. Someone who was tameh lamet (who touched or was in a house with a dead body)
4. He became tameh
5. Miriam
6. To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous
7. The Be'er (well)
8. That there was no water to drink
9. Learn Torah by the rock and speak to it
10. He hit the rock
11. He had to die in the Midbar and did not get to enter Eretz Yisrael
12. Aharon
13. 30 days
14. The Ananei Hakavod
15. Because he was ohev shalo verodef shalom – he ran to make peace

5-6

Questions

1. What is a chok?
2. What is a parah adumah?
3. How many black hairs make a cow not kosher to be used as a parah adumah?
4. Who did the parah adumah make tahor?
5. What happened to the kohen who prepared the Parah Adumah?
6. Which righteous woman died in this week's parsha?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of para adumah?
8. What miracle in the desert happened in her zechut?
9. What did the Bnei Yisrael complain about?
10. What was Moshe supposed to do by the rock?
11. What did Moshe actually do?
12. What punishment did Moshe receive for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it?
13. What did the Bnei Yisrael ask from the king of the Amorites?
14. What did he answer?
15. Who died by Hor Hahar?
16. How long did they mourn for Aharon?
17. Which miracle disappeared when Aharon died?
18. Why were the Bnei Yisrael so sad that Aharon died?
19. How did Moshe get the snakes to stop biting people?
20. Who killed Og Melech HaBashan?

Answers

1. A Mitzvah that we don't understand it's reasoning
2. A red cow (that has never worked and has nothing wrong with it)
3. 2 (or more)
4. Someone who was tameh lamet (who touched or was in a house with a dead body)
5. He became tameh
6. Miriam
7. To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous
8. The Be'er (well)
9. That there was no water to drink
10. Learn Torah by the rock and speak to it
11. He hit the rock
12. He had to die in the Midbar and did not get to enter Eretz Yisrael
13. Let us just pass through your land
14. You may not and if you do I'll come at you with swords
15. Aharon
16. 30 days
17. The Ananei Hakavod
18. Because he was ohev shalo verodef shalom – he ran to make peace
19. He made a copper snake on a pole and the people had to look at it
20. Moshe

Parsha Stories

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/699514/jewish/Fair.htm

Fair?

David had an angry look on his usually cheery face as he stomped into the kitchen. He dumped his schoolbag on a chair and took an apple from the fridge, slamming the door. His father looked at him in surprise.

"What's up, Dave? Why such a happy expression? Things aren't that great, you know!" he said jokingly.

"It's not fair!" the nine year old burst out. "Mr. Brown gave me a massive punishment today, just for drawing a picture of him. And it's the first time I've ever been bad. I'm always really good for him."

"Hmmm! What sort of picture was it?" queried his father.

"We-ell, I suppose it was a bit of a rude picture. But other boys do much worse things and they're not punished so much - I had to miss break and I have to write fifty times 'I must not draw silly pictures when I am supposed to be listening to what the teacher is saying.' Other boys just get lines, or no break, not both. It's just not fair!" he repeated.

"You know, David," said Dad, "I was just reading in the Torah a similar sort of story."

"Really? I didn't know they had schools in the Torah," said David in surprise.

"No, I didn't mean about something that happened in school. In the Torah, when the Jews are in the desert, their well dries up, the well which gave them water. They complain to Moses and Aaron, who pray to G-d. G-d tells Moses that he should take his staff, and in front of the whole Jewish community, speak to a rock, and from this rock water would come out. So the whole Jewish people assembled, to see this miracle."

"I know," said David. "Then Moses hit the rock instead of speaking to it."

"Quite right," said his father. "He hit it, and water came out, but G-d was angry with Moses, for not listening properly. So Moses and Aaron were both punished: G-d told them they could not enter the Holy Land."

"Poor Moses," said David. "That's not fair - he'd brought the Jews out from Egypt and worked so hard, and now G-d isn't letting him go to Israel. And he was such a great man."

"That's exactly why," explained his father. "Because he was a great man, there were higher expectations. For a regular person, it wouldn't have been so bad to do what he did, but for him it was terrible."

"Oh, I think I see! Because I'm usually good, Mr. Brown thought what I did was much worse, so he gave me a harsh punishment..."

David looked a bit happier now. It wasn't so bad, being in the same position as Moses! And it wouldn't take him so long to do those lines, if he started them now and didn't waste time...

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/385622/jewish/Chukat-Parshah-Lesson.htm

Chukat Parshah Lesson

By [Malka Touger](#)

The eighth-graders were busy preparing for graduation. They were going to put on a presentation and everyone was assigned a job. Sarit was responsible for the scenery. As she was working one afternoon, her teacher, Mrs. Zack, called her.

"Sarit, you know Simi's mother had a baby and Simi needs to help at home in the afternoons. Simi's job was to arrange the props, and I would like you to take over for her. You are very talented and I am sure you will set up the props tastefully."

"Thank you for the compliment," Sarit said. "But scenery is what I do best. Wouldn't it be better if I just concentrate on my job and get it done well?"

"Come, Sarit," Mrs. Zack replied. "Let's take a short break from the paintbrush and do a bit of `living with the times.'"

"In the Torah we read about the passing away of Miriam and Aaron. The Torah tells us that, in their merit, the Jewish people were accompanied by a well of fresh water and the clouds of glory on their journeys through the desert. When Miriam and Aaron passed away, the well and the clouds also disappeared."

"But," interrupted Sarit. "I remember learning that the well and the clouds accompanied the Jewish people right up to the day they entered Israel."

"That's right, Sarit. They did disappear with Miriam and Aaron's death, but they came back in the merit of Moses. And that's just what I wanted to discuss with you. The Torah tells us that the manna the Jewish people ate in the desert came in Moses' merit. Moses was a leader, and a leader knows and cares about his people and treats each one according to his needs. This is like manna - food which is given according to the needs of every person."

"That reminds me of the way our sages describe how Moses took the sheep out to pasture," said Sarit. "He let the young ones graze first because they needed the softest grass."

Mrs. Zack nodded. "Good, Sarit. Now perhaps you can figure out why the clouds of glory were in the merit of Aaron. I'll give you a hint - the clouds surrounded and protected all of the Jewish Nation, no matter who they were."

"Oh, I know," replied Sarit enthusiastically. "Aaron was a lover of Israel and no matter who they were."

"And Miriam," continued Mrs. Zack, "devoted herself to caring for the tiny babies in Egypt. Even in the depths of exile and turmoil, Miriam filled the people with life and hope. And in her merit came the water which flows from high places to low.

"Now, do you know why the clouds and the well came back in Moses merit? With Miriam and Aaron gone, Moses took upon himself to care for the Jews and fill in, devoting himself to the tasks that Miriam and Aaron had performed. This is what a leader is, a person who takes responsibility when the need arises, even if the tasks had originally been performed by others.

"Every Jew must learn from Moses. We too must do what has to be done. Even when we are dedicated to our specific job, we must be willing to take on more when the need arises."

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/Parshat-Chukat.pdf?docid=3574&ie=1&showobject=1>

LESSONS FROM THE PARSHA

CALMLY ERADICATE ANGER

May Meriva (the waters of strife)." This event was a tragedy for Moshe and Aharon. They committed an aveyra so terrible that it prevented them from fulfilling their greatest ambition – entering Eretz Yisrael. What exactly was their aveyra? This is a subject of much discussion amongst the meforshim. The Rambam in Shemoneh Prakim, chapter four, explains that the aveyra was anger, which led to Chilul Hashem (desecration of the Holy Name).

Let us quickly review the facts. A miraculous well had accompanied the Bnei Yisrael throughout their forty years in the desert. This was in the merit of Miriam the tsadekes. When she died, the well stopped giving water. The Bnei Yisrael began to protest over the lack of water. Hashem commanded Moshe to take his staff, gather the people together, and speak to the rock. Water would then come forth. Did Hashem command Moshe to be angry or show any signs of anger? Not at all. A request for water does not deserve an angry reaction.

At this point, we must mention that Moshe was the Gadol HaDor, in a generation that was on the exalted madrayga (spiritual level) of prophecy. They knew that their exalted leader's deeds are the types that bring a person greatness in this world and the next.

Therefore, everyone strove to learn from him and emulate his actions. If he showed patience, then they would know that patience was the proper reaction for their request for water.

Moshe erred by becoming angry. He took his staff, gathered the people, and said to them, “Listen you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?” (Bamidbar 20:10). He then hit the rock twice, instead of speaking to it. They had requested water, and subsequently saw Moshe Rabbeinu get angry at their request. Therefore, they understood that anger is the proper reaction to such a request. The Rambam explains that anger is an evil action, which comes from impure sources in the soul. An entire generation learned an evil middah from their leader. Such a massive mistake is a Chilul Hashem, as reflected in the next verse. Hashem said, “Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Bnei Yisrael, therefore you will not bring this congregation into the Land that I have given them.” (Bamidbar 20:12).

The Baalei Mussar devote much effort to correcting the middah of anger. The Orchos Tsaddikim cites the Gemora (Nedarim 22a) which states that all sorts of gehennom rule over one who gets angry. Anger also leads to physical ailments as the verse states, “Hashem will give you an angry heart, longing of the eyes, and suffering of the soul” (all symptoms of disease) [Devarim 28:65]. The Gemora in Nedarim adds that an angry person does not even consider the Shechina (Divine Presence) important. He forgets his learning and becomes foolish. His aveiyros surely outnumber his mitzvos, and he will suffer a great punishment.

People lose control of themselves when they become angry. They do things that they would never do when calm. Why? Because anger takes away a person’s seichel (common sense). Therefore, it is impossible for a habitually angry person to avoid great aveiyros. A different Gemora (Eiruvim 65b) relates that a person’s true nature is revealed in a situation that provokes him. If he overcomes his desire to become angry, that reveals his true wisdom. If his anger rules, then his foolishness is exposed. “Hashem loves three people . . . one who does not get angry” (Pesachim 113b).

The Sefer Charedim (9:42) explains that a person loses his holy neshama when he becomes angry. It is replaced by the evil spirit of Avodah Zara (idol worship), and the person himself becomes Avodah Zara. This is hinted to in the verse, “You shall not make yourselves molten gods” (Shemos 34:17). You yourself become a {molten} god (Avodah Zara) when you become angry. Therefore, anger is actually a negative commandment in the Torah.

The root of anger is pride. A person tells himself, “I feel that I do not receive the honor that I deserve, therefore I become angry.” This pride is a fallacy, stemming from a weakness in emunah. The proper mental response is, “Hashem knows what is best for me. He knows that the honor that I feel I deserve is really not good for me. If I had perfect emunah, I would humbly realize that I am getting exactly what is good for me. Perhaps I am not receiving the honor because I need to work on my humility. The thing that I desire may really be damaging to me.” Either way, anger is not the proper reaction.

he Sefer Charedim brings us techniques to avoid anger. The word “Noach”, besides being the name of the tsaddik, also means “at rest”. Therefore the verse, “And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem” (Bereshis 6:8) can be darshened to mean, “A person whose heart is always at rest and settled, finds favor in the eyes of Hashem.” The next verse mentions Noach three times to teach that Noach’s heart was very settled because his speech, his walking, and his deeds were all done restfully, without any anger. Outward calmness, leads to inner peace, which leaves no place for anger to enter.

Kinderlach . . .

Anger is one of the worst things in the world. It can destroy everything that a person has hoped and worked for his entire life. It robbed Moshe Rabbeinu of achieving his greatest ambition. It causes a person to lose his soul, his learning, and his seichel. In their place come disease, Avodah Zara, and gehennom. Oy va voy voy voy. How do we avoid this terrible fate? Firstly, we must review these mussar thoughts regularly, to remind us of the seriousness of anger. Secondly, we should strive for calmness and peace in all of our outward actions. The Ramban tells us to always speak softly. The Sefer Charedim advises walking and moving in a restful and settled manner. These outward actions will sink into our inner soul and eventually eradicate the evil middah of anger from our hearts.

<http://www.aish.com/torahportion/pArchive.asp?eventType=39&eventName=Chukat>

There are other stories available as well at the above website.

http://www.aish.com/torahportion/family/Good_Choice0.asp

Chukat (Numbers 19:1-22:1)

Good Choice

From this week's Torah Portion

No matter what dumb or foolish choice a person may make in life, there's always hope to change things for the better. In this week's Torah portion we learn about how in the times of the Tabernacle, a person who became contaminated in the most severe way still had a way to undo it and cleanse himself. So, too, we can always choose to 'clean up' our act if we want.

Story

In our story, a kid finds out that even after a foolish choice - there's still a choice to make.

SWIM TRUNKS

A boy in a bathing suit, his bright yellow swim-goggles high on his forehead, came rushing into the bunk.

"Okay, Josh. It's 3:00, time to hit the pooooool!"

But his friend, who was lying on his cot, just opened his half-sleeping eyes and waved him away. "You can go, Marc. I just wanna keep sleepin'."

"Sleeping? What are you talkin' about? We just made up a little while ago at lunch how we were gonna be swim buddies for the camp free-swimming period every day!"

The boy on the bed let out a slight groan.

"Hey, are you sick or something, Josh?"

"Not exactly. I ... you know ... I ate some stuff from the big 'care package' of candy and snacks my mom sent me." He sat up a bit and pointed to his half-open foot locker bursting with more sugary and crunchy treats than a pirate's treasure chest. On the floor surrounding it, were about a dozen crumpled empty snack wrappers. "I guess I ate too much and it kinda knocked me out."

"I'll say! No wonder you're belly-up man." Marc sputtered, "It's a miracle you're still alive!"

"Yeah, I know. It was dumb - but I did it. So I'm gonna ... ugh ... have to skip swimming for today. But tomorrow we'll do it, *for sure*."

But the next day, the exact scene repeated itself.

"Hey, Josh, what's happening this time?" Marc asked, seeing his friend laid out on his bunk bed like a beached whale.

"Same thing," groaned Josh. "I was really into going swimming today, but then I dug into the snacks in a big way and..." the kid grimaced, put his hand on his stomach and belched.

"I don't get you." Mark shook his head. "You mean to tell me you'd rather stuff yourself every day with junk food and pass out than splash around for an hour and a half in a cool, sparkling Olympic-sized pool?"

"No way!" Josh protested. "I *love* free-swimming period. It's my favorite part of summer camp. Just, you know, I keep making the same dumb mistake over and over. But what can I do? I guess I'm stuck and that's just the way it's going to

be with me this year. You'd better just pick yourself out a new swim buddy, okay?"

Mark shook his head. "Uh, uh. You're the man. Just because you did something dumb, doesn't mean you have to *keep* doing it. Look, I've got a plan that's gonna make sure we swim together tomorrow and every day after that. But you've gotta be willing to cooperate. Interested?"

Josh's eyes lit up as he nodded his head.

THE NEXT DAY

"Hey, this water's great!" Josh laughed, splashing the cool water on his chest.

"Better than a couple of bags of greasy chips, huh?" Marc smiled, treading water.

"Definitely! I'm so glad I'm not making that same dumb choice any more. Your plan to lock all my snacks up in your trunk and let me pick out just one every day after lunch was a stroke of genius!"

"*Stroke* of genius, maybe," Marc smiled, "but that doesn't mean you can beat me in the *backstroke*. Let's race!"

Discussion Questions

Ages 3-5

Q. How did Josh feel about missing swimming every day by eating too many snacks?

A. He was disappointed, but didn't think he could change.

Q. How did he feel in the end?

A. He was glad that he'd found a way to change.

Ages 6-9

Q. What life-lesson do you think Josh learned from what happened?

A. He'd felt that he was stuck having to keep making the self-destructive choice of overeating snacks and missing swimming, but he learned that he didn't have to and he could find a way out.

Q. Do you think Marc's plan to lock up the food was the best way to change the way Josh made his choices? Why or why not?

A. It would have been ideal if Josh could have stopped himself just with his own will power. But many times in life we can't rely on pure will power to get us to make the choices we deep-down want, so in that case, making strategies to avoid the destructive situation is a good, smart option.

Ages 10 and Up

Q. Why do you think people can find it so hard to change for the better?

A. It's easy to get stuck in a negative pattern. After enough times of making a foolish choice, we can almost start to believe that there's no alternative. But a sign of spiritual greatness, and one of the main things we're living for, is to work steadily to grow and live in closer and closer harmony to our highest ideals and values.

Q. Do you think there are any negative traits that are beyond a person's ability to improve?

A. While each of us have negative traits, which, due to our upbringings or innate natures can present a big challenge to change, if we sincerely want to grow - and ask G-d for help - we can make greater strides than we would ever believe possible.

Parsha Games

<http://www.aje.org.uk/harayon/>

K-2

Aharon, the Kohen Gadol, Moshe's brother, was known for his peace-loving nature

Middah/ Jewish Value

- **Making-up and being friends**

Activity

An early lesson we learn is to make friends again after we have had a disagreement. Sing this song about being friends and not fighting. Use actions such as index finger wagging (please don't fight), taking each other's hands (hold on tight), arm around the shoulder (best of friends etc...)

Tune: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Please don't fight, it's not right,
Take my hands and hold on tight.
Best of friends we now will be
If you'll come and play with me.
Please don't fight, it's not right,
Take my hands and hold on tight.

3-4

In the parashah the Bnei Yisrael complained that they had no water. Hashem told Moshe to speak to the rock to get water from it. Moshe, in his anger with the people, hit the rock instead, therefore disobeying God's instructions. He was not allowed into Eretz Yisrael as a punishment

Middah/ Jewish Value

- **Obeying instructions**

Activity

Play 'Simon Says' (listening to and acting upon instructions)

OR

Play the obstacle game, to show the importance of following instructions. Set up a simple 'obstacle course'.

The children all sit well away from it. Choose two children - one to act as instruction-giver and one, lightly blindfolded, who will attempt to follow the course.

The instruction-giver must give clear and precise instructions. The participant must listen very carefully and follow the instructions precisely so that they do not trip or fall.

5-6

In the parashah we read of the death of Aharon, the Kohen Gadol. Aharon was known for making 'peace'

Middah/ Jewish Value

- **Looking for ways of making peace**

Activity

We all have arguments from time to time - it's human nature. The important thing is not to let a situation get out of hand and to learn how to calm things down.

Drama activity

Split the children into groups of two. Give five minutes to prepare a short scenario, giving each group one of the following situations: in the playground, in the lunch queue, brothers and sisters at home, on the sports pitch, in the children's service. The leader can stop the playlet at any time and invite all the other children to act as Aharon, and suggest ways of peacefully resolving the situation.