

PARSHAT CHUKAT  
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*Chromatic Musings #2*  
Fabric Assemblage by Vaishali Oak

## THE FAITH OF INTERPRETATION

1. "...and *before their very eyes* order the rock to yield its water." (Numbers 20:8)

"Because you did not trust (לֹא־הֵאֱמַנְתֶּם) Me enough to affirm My sanctity before the eyes of the Israelite people..." (Numbers 20:12)

2. אָמַן - confirm, support, nourish  
אֱמוּנָה - firmness, steadfastness, fidelity  
אֶמְנָה - river flowing through Damascus (2 Kings 5:12)  
אֲמָן - master-worker, artist
3. It is a standard characteristic of artworks that they often come with features that are unusual, puzzling, initially mysterious or disconcerting, or with features whose portents are far from obvious. This is not a problem to be dreaded when facing artworks. *Artworks require a tolerance for ambiguity.* Since artworks are rarely obvious, they need to be interpreted to be understood....The admissibility of an interpretation is ultimately determined by a community of interpreters and the community is self-correcting. (Terry Barrett, *Principles for Interpreting Art*)

4. We each look at art through the lens of our whole lived experience, and therefore we each experience a work of art in our own unique way. Interpretation, therefore, invites us to recognize relationships, navigate multiple meanings, invest in looking, and demonstrate curiosity from whatever point of view we have. (Jennifer DePrizio, Director of Interpretation, Cleveland Art Museum)

5. Each person saw himself standing in the presence of the rock. (Bamidbar Rabbah 19:5)

Each person sees his/her own presence in the presence of the rock. Looking at the thing, one endows it with a face; a space is created between two faces. One enhances the rock with one's own life. (Avivah Zornberg, *Bewilderments*)

6. This moment was to prepare the people for a post-miraculous new period. It was designed as a transition from the miracles and direct intervention of the wilderness to the human work of study, prayer and decision making that is part of living in the land of promise. (Based on Ha'amek Davar)

7. Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom...But Edom answered him, "You shall not pass through us..." So Edom would not let Israel cross, and Israel turned away from them. (Numbers 20:14-21)

Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well – sing to it..." (Numbers 21:17-18)..

Israel now sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites...Sihon would not let Israel pass...But Israel put them to the sword... (Numbers 21:21-24)