



Parsha Chukat ~ Decree

Bemidbar 19:1 – 22:1

Beit Emet Congregation ~ Jerusalem, Israel & Vancouver, WA

Ben Ehrhardt, Shamash

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Last week's Torah portion was "**Parsha Korach**". And with it, we passed the mid-point of the **Book of Numbers**, or **B'midbar** (*In the Wilderness*), which is **B'midbar 17:20**. Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum points out that, "*Korach's conspiracy is not explicitly dated in the Torah narrative, but is considered to have taken place early on during the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the wilderness. The Torah passes over the 38 years of wandering after the sin of the Spies in almost complete silence -- except for a list given later on of the stopping points on the journey, Numbers 33, in parsha Mas'ei. In our present parsha of Chukat, we move almost imperceptibly from the initial period in the wilderness following the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah, right to the end of the 40 years of wandering and the first stages of the conquest of the Land of Israel.*"

The Hebrew word "**Chukat**" (*Chet-kof-tav*) means "**ordinance**" or "**decree**". While the name "**Chukat**" might seem to indicate one ordinance or decree, there are actually several decrees, or "**Chukim**" contained in these verses. Our parsha this week opens with the "**Chukat**" of the "**red heifer**".

As we've been learning together, *parsha* by *parsha*, in everything that YHVH taught Moshe, every command, decree and right ruling that He gave, He would instruct Moshe in the manner of "**uncleanness**" (or how the contamination occurs) and how one is "**purified**" or made "**clean**". This week is no exception. Let's begin, this year, with **B'midbar / Numbers 19:1-10**; **And YHVH spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying, "This is a law (Chukat or Decree) of the Torah which YHVH has commanded, saying, 'Speak to the children of Yisra'el, that they bring you a red heifer, a perfect one, in which there is no blemish and on which a yoke has never come. And you shall give it to El'azar the priest, and he shall bring it outside the camp, and shall slaughter it before him. And El'azar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. And the heifer shall be burned before his eyes – he burns its hide, and its flesh, and its blood, and its dung. And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and throw them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer. The priest shall then wash his garments, and shall bathe his body in water, and afterward come into the camp, but the priest is unclean until evening. And he who is burning it washes his garments in water, and shall bathe his body in water, and is unclean until evening. And a clean man shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and shall place them outside the camp in a clean place. And they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Yisra'el for the water for uncleanness, it is for cleansing from sin. And he who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his garments, and is unclean until evening. And it shall be a law forever to the children of Yisra'el and to the stranger who sojourns in their midst.**"

Here, YHVH introduces the Decree of the “**Red Heifer**”. The rabbis call this the Law of the “**Parah Dumah**”. This is very interesting, because the words don’t exactly match up here. According to the rabbis, whenever the Torah presents a Law (*mitzvah*), it makes a particular reference such as, “This is the Law of the Pesach (Pascal or Passover) Lamb” for example. If the Torah is going to present these particular commands dealing with uncleanness and purification, according to this principle, it should say something like, “**This is the Law of spiritual (or ritual) contamination and purity**”? But, this is not what Torah says here, Why does the Torah say, “**This is the Decree of the Torah which YHVH commanded,....**”? It would appear that the “Decree of the Red Heifer” is somehow related to the whole of Torah. It is obviously very important to Adonai for us to understand and follow this command. Especially so, because in **verse 10** it says, “**And it shall be a decree forever to the children of Yisra’el and to the stranger who sojourns in their midst.**” According to the same rabbis, this Mitzvah is, quote, “one of the most incomprehensible of all the Laws of the Torah.” They say, “it’s one we cannot understand. But, we must obey because it comes from Elohim.”

There are three general categories of Torah commands; “**Eidot**”, “**Mishpatim**” and “**Chukim**”. The first type, “**Eidot**”, are commands that recall or testify to past events; like the laws regarding Shabbat or Pesach. “**Mishpatim**” are commands that are also dictated by mortal understanding; like honoring one’s parents or not stealing. “**Chukim**” are commands that have no rational basis or explanation on the surface. Just because we might not understand the reason behind a command; we are still expected by Elohim to guard and keep it. He does not have to justify Himself to His creation. We should want to keep even these commands because we are motivated by “**kabbolat ol**” (the *Heavenly yoke*) of Torah. But, while we are to be obedient to all of HaShem’s commands, He does desire us to understand what He’s asking of us. This is why it is important to study His Word, so that the rationale, which is at times hidden from view, will be seen. This actually helps us to internalize the Torah, as He writes it on our hearts. Ahmeim?

Now, in **verse 2**, YHVH commands the Children of Yisra’el to bring, to Moshe and Aharon, a “**Red Heifer**”. Now, as I pointed out, the rabbis call this “**Parah Dumah**” (for *Red Heifer*). While “**Parah**” does translate as “**heifer**”, it is Strong’s #6510 and also means; “**to break**”, “**to shatter**” and so means “**broken one**”. However, Dumah does **not** mean “**red**”. In fact, the way this phrase is actually written in the Hebrew Torah is “**adamah parah**”. The word for “**red**” is Strong’s #0122 “**adom / adam / adamah**” and means “**red**”, “**ruddy**”, “**man**” and “**lentils**” (as in when Ya’aqob prepared the red lentil stew, for which Esau sold his birthright). So, in context, we have “**Red Heifer**” or “**Man to be Broken**”. Even though it’s not in our Scripture reading, we’ll look at the word “**Dumah**”. Remember, it came from the rabbinical writings, the commentaries on this passage. Interestingly, “**Dumah**” is a Hebrew word that means “**silent**” or “**in silence**”.

Next, the “**Red Heifer**” is to be a “**perfect one**”. “**Tamyim**” is the Hebrew word here. Strong’s #8549, meaning; to be “**perfect**”, “**undefiled**”, “**complete**”. It is from the root word, #8552, “**Tamam**” meaning; “**to be finished**”. Where have we heard, “**It is finished.**”? Yochanan / **John 19:30**. Then we have, “**in which there is no blemish...**” Blemish is the Hebrew word “**muwm**” and is Strong’s #3971 meaning; “**physical defect**”, or “**moral stain**”. And to finish **verse 2**, “**and on which a yoke has never come.**” This gets real interesting. We normally think of yoke as “**work**”, or “**to be worked**”. However, the Hebrew word used here is, as we saw above, “**ol**” (*ole*) and is Strong’s #5923 and is from #5953 “**alal**” (*aw-lal*) meaning; “**deal with severely**”, to “**abuse, mock, make a fool of**” or “**thrust in**”. While this “**Red Heifer**” was to be “**perfect**”, without “**blemish**” or “**moral stain**” and “**not abused**”; the abuse would certainly come to our “**Red Heifer**”. And, Yahshua, like the *Red Heifer*, was killed outside the camp and His blood was shed / sprinkled toward the Dwelling Place, as He faced it.

Why the symbolism of a cow? Why not a ram, goat or lamb? That's a fair question. As I said, YHVH wants us to **"get it"**, to understand. What Torah event best symbolizes sin in Yisra'el? After the Children of Yisra'el swore to **"Sh'ma"** or **"do and hear"** all the Words of the Covenant, while Elohim was writing the Ketubah, with His own finger, what was going on in the camp? **"Na'aph"** in Hebrew, or *adultery* and *idolatry* with a **"golden calf"**. What better symbol for cleansing here than a **"red heifer"**? The Hebrew phrase used in **Shemot / Exodus 32:4 & 8** is **"masekah egged"** or **"molten male calf"**. The Hebrew in **B'midbar 19:2** is **"adamah parah"** or **"red heifer"**, which is a **"female calf"**. The male represents **"strength"**. Remember their sin was committed in strength, with a **"high hand"**, a fist raised, open rebellion. The female, represents **"racham"** or **"mercy"** and the forgiveness HaShem extends to us, as it is a female attribute of Elohim.

Now, let's move on to the second half of this chapter. **B'midbar / Numbers 19:11-22; 'He who touches the dead of any human being is unclean for seven days. He is to cleanse himself with the water on the third day, and on the seventh day he is clean. But if he does not cleanse himself on the third day, then on the seventh day he is not clean. Anyone who touches the dead of a human being, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the Dwelling Place of YHVH. And that being shall be cut off from Yisra'el. He is unclean, for the water for uncleanness was not sprinkled on him, his uncleanness is still upon him. This is the Torah when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent are unclean for seven days, and every open vessel which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean. Anyone in the open field who touches someone slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, is unclean for seven days. And for the unclean being they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for cleansing from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. And a clean man shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and shall sprinkle it on the tent, and on all the vessels, and on the beings who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, or the slain, or the dead, or a grave. And the clean one shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day. And on the seventh day he shall cleanse himself, and shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and shall be clean in the evening. But the man who is unclean and does not cleanse himself, that being shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the set-apart place of YHVH – water for uncleanness has not been sprinkled on him, he is unclean. And it shall be a law for them forever. And the one who sprinkles the water for uncleanness washes his garments. And the one who touches the water for uncleanness is unclean until evening. And whatever the unclean being touches is unclean. And the being who touches it is unclean until evening.'** ”

As usual, we see some interesting phrasing in **verse 11** above. It says, **'He who touches the dead of any human being is unclean for seven days.** The Hebrew word used here for **"touches"** is **"nagah"**, Strong's #5060 and means **"touch"**, **"to reach for"**, **"to violate"**, **"to touch the heart of"**. It implies that one **"desires to touch"**. It's a conscious decision. Now, the word for **"dead"** used throughout these verses is **"muwth"**, Strong's #4191, meaning **"to be dead"**, **"brought to naught"** or **"to fail"** (as in *your heart fails you*). As we've learned, death is the result of sin, of **"heart failure"**. Call it what you will, **"evil inclination"** or whatever. Much is written in Scripture about the heart of man. Among many things Yahshua said in **Mattityahu 5:8; "Blessed are the clean in heart, because they shall see Elohim."** Ya'aqob (*James*) said in **Ya'aqob / James 4:8; Draw near to Elohim and He shall draw near to you. Cleanse hands, sinners. And cleanse the hearts, you double-minded!** Next we have **"any human being"**. Some translations read **"body of a man"**. The phrase here is actually **"nefesh adam"** or **"being of a man"**. The verse then says this person is **"unclean"** (**tame**) for seven days. So what is this saying on a deeper level? Anyone who reaches out to touch that which is **"death to one's nefesh (or being) is unclean"**. If you reach out to sin, you are a sinner. You are unclean.

We are to cleanse ourselves with the water on the third day, and on the seventh day we are clean. Yahshua's death atones for us. He gained victory over death on the third day. If we wash ourselves with the "**water**" of the third day, we will be declared clean on the seventh day. That day represents the first resurrection which occurs when Mashiach comes on the seventh day, Yom Shabbat. If we do not cleanse ourselves on the third day, we are not clean. In fact, we are cut off from the Kingdom of Yisra'el. Here in **verse 13** it says that the "**water for uncleanness**" was not sprinkled on him. The phrase here is "**mayim niddah**" or "**waters for separation**" (**impurity**). This makes total sense; especially since we've made ourselves an "**unclean**" or "**separated**" bride. It also says that if we do not cleanse ourselves, we defile the Dwelling Place of Elohim. What, or who, is the "**Dwelling Place**" or "**Mishkan**" of Elohim? In the absence of the Temple, we ourselves are. He won't dwell in an unclean Tabernacle.

The next two verses (**14 & 15**) are intriguing; ***This is the Torah when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent are unclean for seven days, and every open vessel which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean.*** As a leader, I had to pray about this one. "**Tent**" here is the word "**ohel**", Strong's #168, meaning "**Tent**", "**Dwelling Place**" or "**Tabernacle**". This is directed primarily to congregational leaders; but all Yisra'el as well. Any one who "**reaches out toward death**" in the "**Meeting Place**" makes all who are in the Meeting Place unclean. This is, in part, where Judah gets the idea that if one sins within the congregation, it affects all Jews. I'll give you just one example. While in the "**church**", we've all "**taken away**" and "**added to**" His Torah of Truth. The next verse goes on to say that every open vessel, which has no cover, is unclean. This is very interesting, in that the phrases used here have more than one meaning. For "**every open vessel**", we have the Hebrew phrase "**pethach kelee**", which can also be read as "**engraved armor**". Then we have "**no cover fastened**", which is "**tsamid patheil**" or "**bracelet and thread**". Elohim marks His people. It's also interesting that these verses say that all in the "**tent**" of this "**one who reached out to death**" are unclean for seven days. But that those who have no "**covering**", who are not "**marked**" or have no "**engraved armor**" or "**bracelet**" are "**unclean**" (**tameh**) period. There's no time limit here. I love how this verse implies that *our covering, our armor*, is "**bound**" or "**fastened**" to us. Sha'ul called himself a "**bondservant**" of Elohim. In the world our bonds are "**shackles**" and "**chains**". But, with YHVH, our bonds are "**armor**" and "**bracelets**", or *protection and bridal adornments*.

We read on that, ***Anyone in the open field who touches someone slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, is unclean for seven days.*** This one isn't too different from the one above. It reads a little different in the KJV. In the Hebrew, the word for "**one slain**" is "**chahal**", or "**one profaned**", the word for "**sword**" is "**kereb**", or "**stone cutter's tool**" (*as used in the hewing and marking of living stones*), the word for "**open**" is "**panim**" or "**face**" and the word for "**field**" is "**sadeh**" or "**open land**". Next is "**who has died**", which is "**muwth**" or one who has "**failed**" or is "**dead**". Or "**a bone of a man**", which is "**etsem adam**" or "**substance of a man**". And finally, the "**grave**", or "**qeber**", which is "**sepulcher**" or "**tomb**", as opposed to "**she'ol**" which is "**grave**". So, what am I saying? Well, according to the BDHV (Ben's Dyslexic Hebrew Version), it would be accurate to read it as; ***Anyone who reaches for one that is profaned by the sword in the open, or the dead (as sinners), or the substance of men (earthly riches), or the tomb (to live among the dead), shall be unclean seven days.***

So now, just as YHVH points out how the contamination happens. He shows Moshe, and us, how the purification takes place. ***And for the unclean being they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for cleansing from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. And a clean man shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and shall sprinkle it on the tent, and on all the vessels, and on the beings who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, or the slain, or the dead, or a grave.*** For cleansing, we take the ashes of the heifer. Now, this too is interesting. The Hebrew word here for ashes is "**aphar**", Strong's #6083 and it means also "**dust**". It's

the exact same word used in the following verses; **B'reshith / Genesis 2:7**; *And YHVH Elohim formed the man out of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils breath of life. And the man became a living being.* Also, as HaShem told Avram in **B'reshith / Genesis 13:16**; *“And I shall make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that, if a man could count the dust of the earth, then your seed also could be counted.* We have Yahshua as the Son of Adam (from the dust) and by His sacrifice, we become part of Avraham’s seed, the “**dust of the earth**” who cannot be counted.

Now, to these ashes (this *dust*) we add “**running water**”. In t Hebrew, the phrase is “**chai mayim**” or “**living water**” Hello! **Yochanan / John 4:9-10** tells us; *The woman of Shomeron therefore said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Yehudite, ask a drink from me, a woman of Shomeron?” For Yehudim do not associate with Shomeronites. Yahshua answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of Elohim, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me to drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”* And, **Yochanan / John 7:37-38** says; *And on the last day, the great day of the festival, Yahshua stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me, and let him who believes in Me drink. As the Scripture said, out of His innermost shall flow rivers of living water.”* I cannot quote these verses without quoting two from the prophet Jeremiah that speak of the “**Living Water**”. As YHVH decries the Children of Yisra’el through the prophet, we read in **Yirmeyahu / Jeremiah 2:12-13**; *“Be amazed, O heavens, at this, and be frightened, be utterly dried up,” declares YHVH. “For My people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew out for themselves cisterns, cracked cisterns, which do not hold water.* And, in **Yirmeyahu 17:13**; *YHVH, the expectation of Yisra’el, all who forsake You are put to shame. “Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken YHVH, the fountain of living waters.”*

In the closing verses of this chapter we see that a “**clean man**” shall take the “**hyssop**” and dip it in the “**water**” and sprinkle it on the tent, all those in it, all who have profaned themselves by death and that which leads to death. Who is this “**clean man**” who will sprinkle on the third day and on the seventh day? In the Hebrew, the phrase used is “**tahowr lysh**”, the “**pure Husband**”. “**lysh**” is a very interesting Hebrew word. It is Strong’s #0376 and means “**man**”, “**husband**” and “**servant**”. It is spelled “**aleph-yud-shin**”, which means the “**Strong Hand of El Shaddai**”. The numeric value of “**lysh**” is 311, which equals “**yesha**” or “**pardon**”. I only know of one “**Clean Man**” who matches all these descriptions and meanings, Yahshua. It even says in **verse 21** that He who is clean becomes unclean by touching the “**mayim Niddah**” or “**waters of separation**” which are the “**waters for purification**”. In **2 Corinthians 5:21** Sha’ul says of Yahshua; *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of Elohim.* But, as **B’midbar / Numbers 19**, **verses 19 & 20** indicate, it is ultimately our choice; *‘And the clean one shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day. And on the seventh day he shall cleanse himself, and shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and shall be clean in the evening. But the man who is unclean and does not cleanse himself, that being shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the set-apart place of YHVH – water for uncleanness has not been sprinkled on him, he is unclean.*

Now, let’s begin **Chapter 20 of B’midbar / Numbers** we read in **Verse 1**; *And the children of Yisra’el, all the congregation, came into the Wilderness of Tsin in the first month, and the people stayed in Qadesh. And Miryam died there and was buried there.* It’s so matter of fact, you can read right over it and miss an important point. Here we begin to see, if we look, that the older generation are beginning to die and be replaced by the younger generation. As Rabbi Greenbaum writes, *“The Generation of the Wilderness have passed on, and the Generation of the Conquest now begin their advance. As the Torah directs our eyes to the end goal of the wandering in the wilderness*

-- entry into the Land to fulfill the Torah there -- it first focuses our eyes upon the end goal of man, which is death: "This is the Torah: when a man dies." (Numbers 19:14). For unless we come to terms with death, we cannot truly live. Death is a fact, perhaps the main fact, of life. We are forced to confront it at some time or another. In order to come to terms with it, we have to learn how to look at it."

I want to begin to set the stage here. **Verse 1** says that the entire congregation of B'nei Yisra'el came "**B'midbar Tsin**" or into the "**Wilderness of Tsin**". Remember that "**wilderness**", "**sterile place**" is also the "**mouth**" or "**speaking**". In looking at the word "**Tsin**" we find the word "**thorn**" or "**to prick**" and also "**pointed**". OK? So this place, the "**Wilderness of Tsin**", is also like speaking words that are "**pointed**" or "**that prick**". "**Tsin**" is spelled "**tzadee-nun**". Remember "**tzadee**" is "**righteous**" and "**nun**" is "**seed**" or "**heir**". And, the numeric value of "**tzadee-nun**" is 140, which equals "**ha Qahal**" or "**the assembly**". So this *place* is where the "**Righteous Seed or Heir speaks pointed words to the assembly**".

Here, the people stayed in "**Qadesh**" or "**Set-apart**", "**Holy**". They truly were in a "**Set-apart place**". But, we need to remember also that this is where the rebellion of Korach took place and where the Ten Spies returned and gave the evil report and B'nei Yisra'el chose to refuse to enter the Land that Elohim gave them as their inheritance. It was here that Miryam dies. Now, we know that Miryam was a prophetess from **Shemot / Exodus 15:20**. But, her name means "**rebellious**" or "**contemptuous**". In fact, her name is made up of two root words; "**Mir**" (from "**mar**") which means "**bitter**" and "**yam**" which is "**sea**" or "**large body of water**". Her name is literally "**bitter water**" or "**contemptuous water**".

Now, with that picture in mind, let's read **B'midbar / Numbers 20:1-13**; **And the children of Yisra'el, all the congregation, came into the Wilderness of Tsin in the first month, and the people stayed in Qadesh. And Miryam died there and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation and they assembled against Moshe and against Aharon. And the people contended with Moshe and spoke, saying, "If only we had died when our brothers died before YHVH! Why have you brought up the assembly of YHVH into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? And why have you brought us up out of Mitzrayim, to bring us to this evil place? – not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink." Then Moshe and Aharon went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the esteem of YHVH appeared to them. And YHVH spoke to Moshe, saying, "Take the rod and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aharon. And you shall speak to the rock before their eyes, and it shall give its water. And you shall bring water for them out of the rock and give drink to the congregation and their livestock." And Moshe took the rod from before YHVH as He commanded him. And Moshe and Aharon assembled the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moshe lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod. And much water came out, and the congregation and their livestock drank. But YHVH spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, "Because you did not believe Me, to set Me apart in the eyes of the children of Yisra'el, therefore you do not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." These were the waters of Meribah, because the children of Yisra'el contended with YHVH, and He was set apart among them.**

The rabbis point out that since Moshe was instructed to strike the rock, in Rephidim, in the Wilderness of Sinai and water came forth for them; that they never lacked water in the wilderness, until Miryam's death. The Mishnah teaches that because of her merit, the well followed them throughout the wilderness for all those years. Rabbi Chaim Richman ends his Torah commentary this week by saying, "*Fortunately for Israel, the loss of Miryam's well was only temporary, and it would*

continue to follow Israel throughout the duration of its desert sojourn and eventually enter with the people into the land, where it remains until this day. Miriam's well continues to be a source both of physical sustenance and spiritual nourishment for Israel. Israel's main water sources are hidden underground, many of which have yet to be rediscovered in modern times. The people of Israel today are reclaiming these well springs of life-giving water and Torah knowledge. Miriam's protective legacy lives today, proving, like the red heifer, the predomination of life over death, and like the red heifer, providing the keys to the rebuilding of the Holy Temple and the resumption of the Divine service: **'They shall neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mount, for the land shall be full of knowledge of the L-rd as water covers the sea bed.'** (Isaiah 11:9)

In our *parsha* this week, this was truly a place of "**contention**". It was one thing after another. YHVH allows this to purge the camp of those who would contend with Him and what He is teaching His people.... those who would listen and learn. This is why Adonai refers to this embattled water as "**the waters of Meribah**" in **verse 13**. "**Meribah**" means "**contention**" or "**strife**". The picture here is really simple. In the flesh, you have people that need water to survive in the "**wilderness**", the "**dry place**", the "**sterile place**". In esoteric Hebrew thought, "**water**" or "**mayim**" represents the "**knowledge**" or "**wisdom**" of HaShem's Word. The Zohar teaches that just as the physical waters above and below were poured forth at their loosening by Elohim in the 600th year of Noach, in the 6,000th year, the waters of Elohim (the *knowledge* or the *wisdom of His Word*) will pour forth in preparation of Mashiach's coming. I believe that we're beginning to see that happen today.

There's a message in this text for all of us. For the "**Qahal**", the "**congregation**"; don't contend with YHVH, or His servants that are here to teach you about His "**Mayim**"..... the "**water of the Word**". And for the "**leaders**", the "**nagadim**"; don't give in to "**contention**" by getting overcome with anger. That's what Moshe and Aharon did. They "**lost it**". Moshe was instructed to take Aharon's rod, the symbol of leadership, assemble the people and "**speak to**", "**dabar tom**", the "**Rock**", "**Selah**" and "**it shall give its water (mayim)**". In the wilderness, that meant literal water. But, in our time right now, it means also the knowledge and wisdom of the Living Water, the Word of Elohim. In Moshe's and Aharon's anger, over yet another contention, they belittled the people (calling them all *rebels*), struck the Rock (not once, but twice) and did not give the glory, or esteem, for the water to YHVH. Sha'ul warns in **Ephesians 4:26**; "**Be angry, but do not sin.**" Moshe's and Aharon's sin caused both of them to be forbidden to lead B'nei Yisra'el into the Land of their inheritance. That's a high price to pay for a few minutes of consuming anger.

Regarding Moshe's anger, the Midrash, suggests one possible reason. Since this was the first time in the wilderness, in fact throughout most of his life, that Miryam was not with him. She had even overseen his being found and cared for by Pharaoh's daughter. Perhaps in his grief, he lost his composure lashed out, calling B'nei Yisra'el rebels. Rabbi Chanan Morrison has an interesting teaching on this. He asks why was Moshe to "**speak**" to the rock? Do rocks have ears? He says "**Yes**". And, he adds, "*They [nature and all of its laws] yearn for the messianic light that preceded the creation of the universe. When this unifying light is revealed to all the divided factions of the world, whether visible or hidden, the universe is connected and bound to its foundation.*" But, Torah tells us that Moshe indeed "**struck**" the rock in anger, because of the contention of the people. Rabbi Morrison encourages us about the days of Mashiach's coming, as he writes, "*This tragic discord will be healed through the Godly spirit that beats within the wisdom of Israel. Every Jewish soul shares a part in revealing this wisdom. It will arise powerfully, enabling the word of the living God to penetrate and encourage. The return to patient communication will awaken the underlying listening of the universe in all its splendor.*" He concludes his thought with the words of King David, as he foretells the coming of Mashiach in **Tehillim / Psalms 40:6-7**; "**You have opened for me ears; You have not asked for burnt and sin offerings. Then I said, 'Here I have come in the scroll of a book written about me.'**" "We yearn," he says, "*for a world with open ears, ears capable of hearing the inner call.*"

We aspire for a world where our inner truth, the light of the Life of the worlds, is expressed, not by force and coercion, but by the word and the book.”

Sha’ul / Paul gives us the understanding of Who this Rock is in **1 Corinthians 10:1-4**; *For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were immersed into Moshe in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed, and the Rock was Messiah.* See, Sha’ul takes it right back to this idea of the “water”, “*mayim*” or “*knowledge*” of HaShem’s Word which comes to us by Yahshua HaMashiach.

Now, Sha’ul is also leading us here into yet another picture of Mashiach in this incident of Moshe and the Rock. Moshe struck the Rock and it split and water came flowing out. As YHVH is calling His people to leave this world system in the day of our exodus, **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 48:20-21** says; *“Come out of Babel! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare this with a voice of singing, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth! Say, ‘YHVH has redeemed His servant Ya’aqob!’ ” And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused waters from a rock to flow for them; He split the rock, and waters gushed out.* As we come out of Babel, He gives us the revelation of His knowledge about who and what we really are, as well as the understanding of the truth of the “*Tov News*” or “*Gospel of the Kingdom*”. This “*Good News*” is indeed the “*Restoration of the Kingdom to Yisra’el*”. Yahshua also used the expression, “*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*”. The “*Kingdom of Heaven*” is “*Yisra’el*”. The “*Kingdom is again at hand*”. It is near enough to reach out and grasp it, if you’re truly willing.

One other picture here is that of Yahshua on the stake. Remember, Moshe represents the Law. Next, we read in **Yochanan / John 19:34**, as Yahshua was yet hanging on the tree; *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and instantly blood and water came out.* Just as Moshe struck the Rock and “*mayim*” came out, the “*mayim*” of life did flow, along with the blood, from Yahshua’s side when the soldier struck Him with the spear. Yochanan also wrote in **Yochanan Aleph / 1 John 5:5-8**; *Who is the one who overcomes the world but he who believes that Yahshua is the Son of Elohim? This is the One that came by water and blood: Yahshua Messiah, not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the Truth. Because there are three who bear witness: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. And the three are in agreement.*

It’s interesting to note here that while YHVH says that B’nei Yisra’el contended with Him here at the “*waters of Meribah*”, He does not punish them for their rebellion and trying Him. After all, He had already promised them that that generation would not enter the “*Promised Land*”, because of their unbelief and contention. However, He does indeed discipline both Moshe and Aharon for not setting Him apart in the eyes of the people. In fact, Adonai points out at the end of **verse 13** that through this discipline, “*He was set apart among them*”. Why? Because, He did not withhold His discipline even from Moshe, His friend and Aharon, His High Priest.

Let’s pick it up with **B’midbar / Numbers 20:14-21**; *And Moshe sent messengers from Qadesh to the sovereign of Edom. “This is what your brother Yisra’el said, ‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us, that our fathers went down to Mitzrayim, and we dwelt in Mitzrayim a long time, and the Mitsrites did evil to us and our fathers. And we cried out to YHVH, and He heard our voice and sent the Messenger and brought us up out of Mitsrayim. And see, we are in Qadesh, a city on the edge of your border. Please let us pass over, through your land. We shall not pass over through fields or vineyards, nor drink water from wells, we shall go along the sovereign’s highway. We shall not turn aside, right or left, until we have passed over your*

border.’ ” But Edom said to him, “You do not pass over through me, lest I come out against you with the sword.” And the children of Yisra’el said to him, “We shall go by the highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I shall pay for it. Let me only pass over on foot, without a word.” But he said, “You do not pass over.” And Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand. So when Edom refused to let Yisra’el pass over through his border, Yisra’el turned away from him.

So, Moshe sent messengers to Edom to seek permission to pass through their land. It’s interesting how Moshe reminds the king of Edom that they are family, by referring to Esaw’s brother Yisra’el (Ya’aqob). But, Edom refuses, even to the point of sending out a large army to make sure the Children of Yisra’el turned away from Edom.

B’midbar / Numbers 20:22-29; *And the children of Yisra’el, all the company, departed from Qadesh and came to Mount Hor. And YHVH spoke to Moshe and to Aharon in Mount Hor near the border of the land of Edom, saying, “Aharon is to be gathered to his people, for he is not to enter the land which I have given to the children of Yisra’el, because you rebelled against My mouth at the water of Meribah. Take Aharon and El’azar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor, and strip Aharon of his garments and put them on El’azar his son, for Aharon is to be gathered to his people and die there.” And Moshe did as YHVH commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor before the eyes of all the congregation. And Moshe stripped Aharon of his garments and put them on El’azar his son. And Aharon died there on the top of the mountain. And Moshe and El’azar came down from the mountain. And when all the congregation saw that Aharon was dead, all the house of Yisra’el wept for Aharon, thirty days.*

So, Elohim brings them to Mount Hor, or “**Har Hor**” in the Hebrew. This is an interesting play on words. This translates literally as “**Mount Mountain**”. Although, there is also the implied meaning of “**my parents**”. It would be like saying the “**Mountain is my parents**”. Remember, mountains in Scripture are also symbolic of nations and people. Aharon was “gathered” back to the rock from which he was hewn, his people. It’s also interesting that Har Hor is on the eastern border of Edom, very near Petra which is also a part of this mountain range. It is here that Aharon dies and the office of High Priest, Kohen HaGadol, passes to his son El’azar (**El sustains**). We’re told here too that all Yisra’el wept for Aharon, thirty days. Thirty is the number of the letter “**lamed**” which is the “**shepherd’s staff**”. While Moshe was the prophet of HaShem for his people, Aharon, as High Priest, was indeed their “**shepherd**”. It was his staff that budded, showing the authority Adonai gave him as “**shepherd**”. The “**lamed**” extends above the line and below, as you write it on a piece of paper. The rabbis teach that this shows us that a “**shepherd**” or “**priest**” connects that which is in heaven to that which is in the earth below.

Now, we come to another interesting event in the wilderness. Let’s look at **B’midbar / Numbers 21:1-9;** *And the sovereign of Arad, the Kena’anite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Yisra’el was coming on the way to Atharim, and he fought against Yisra’el and took some of them captive. Then Yisra’el made a vow to YHVH, and said, “If You deliver this people into my hand indeed, then I shall put their cities under the ban.” And YHVH listened to the voice of Yisra’el and gave up the Kena’anites, and they put them and their cities under the ban. So the name of that place was called Chormah. And they departed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Sea of Reeds, to go around the land of Edom. But the being of the people grew impatient because of the way. And the people spoke against Elohim and against Moshe, “Why have you brought us up out of Mitsrayim to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our being loathes this light bread.” And YHVH sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people. And many of the people of Yisra’el died. Then the people came to Moshe, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against YHVH and against you. Pray to YHVH to take away the*

serpents from us.” So Moshe prayed on behalf of the people. And YHVH said to Moshe, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole. And it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moshe made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole. And it came to be, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

This is one of those sections in Torah that seems to be difficult to understand. Yet, when we look at the words, the meaning comes into focus. Here we have B’nei Yisra’el being delivered from their enemy, the Kena’anites of the City of Arad (*sequestered*). **Verse 1** reads that they were coming to “**Atharim**”. King Jimmy calls it “**the way of the spies**”. There’s no indication whether this is, or is not, correct. Atharim is the name of an ancient Kena’anite city, whose origin and meaning are no longer known. It’s interesting, though, that Scripture records that Yisra’el called out to Elohim and made the vow to put the city “*under the ban*” (*wipe it out completely*) if He would intervene for them. It wasn’t Moshe that prayed on their behalf this time. Then we read that HaShem did hear and deliver them. Thus, they named the place “**Chormah**” which means devotion.

As Yisra’el moves around Edom, we’re told that the Children of Yisra’el become impatient because of the time it took and began to speak against Elohim, Moshe and saying that they “**loathed**” or “**hated**” the “**manna**” that YHVH was supplying for them. Basically, they were saying, “*We don’t like You, the leader you gave us and we hate your provision*”. So Elohim sent the “**fiery serpents**” among them, to bite them and “**many**” died, according to **verses 5 & 6**. To some, this has always been a little hard to understand fully. What’s interesting here is that the words translated as “**fiery serpents**” are in the Hebrew “**ha seraphim ve nachashchah**”. This literally translates as “**the poisonous fiery serpents that hiss**”. You no doubt noticed the word “**seraphim**” which was translated here as “**poisonous fiery serpents**”. It is the same word “**seraphim**”, for the ministering flaming being with six wings as spoken of in **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 6:1-7**; *In the year that Sovereign Uzziyahu died, I saw YHVH sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the Hekal. Above it stood seraphim. Each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, “Set-apart, set-apart, set-apart is YHVH of hosts; all the earth is filled with His esteem!” And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, “Woe to me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips – for my eyes have seen the Sovereign, YHVH of hosts.” And one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your crookedness is taken away, and your sin is covered.”*

As the people prayed and repented of their sin in **verse 7**, YHVH had Moshe make a copper or bronze serpent and place it on a pole so that all who have been bitten and look upon it, might be healed and delivered from these “**seraphim**”, in **verses 8 and 9**.

Serpents represent a number of things in different cultures and contexts throughout history. They represent “**wisdom**” and “**healing**” in some cultures. Because of misinterpretation, these verses are often used to suggest that this is where the “**caduceus**” (*the symbol of medicine*) came from. That is definitely **not** the case. The caduceus, “*snake on a stick*” is a Greek symbol with its origins in ancient Pergamos; which was, in very ancient times, considered the seat of all worldly knowledge. It’s ruins survive today, even though many of its artifacts and temples are scattered around Europe. It was a part of Nimrod’s Babylonian kingdom and referred to by Yahshua as the “**place where the throne of satan is**”, according to **Revelation 2:13**.

In Scripture, the serpent is equated with “**sin**” and our “**sin nature**” or “**yetzer hara**” (*the evil inclination*). These “**seraphim**”, “**fiery serpents**” that are “**hissing**” represent more than just “**snakes**”

They highlight our basic problem in relating to YHVH, our Elohim, and each other. There are always those that are “**hissing**” or better said, “**whisssspering**” in someone’s ear. Is it true what Allen said about you? That you.....? *Shhhhhurly*, that’s not true. This is exactly what played out as the “**serpent**” (*nachashchah – hissing one*) spoke to Chawah (*Eve*) to cause her to sin. This is why in **B’reshith / Genesis 3:15** HaShem says to the serpent; “**And I put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall crush your head, and you shall bruise His heel.**” Remember here that a third of the “*heavenly beings*” fell along with satan. There were, no doubt, among those some “**seraphim**” who fell also. These, instead of speaking praises as Yeshayahu records above, “**Set-apart, set-apart, set-apart is YHVH of hosts; all the earth is filled with His glory!**”, these “*fallen ones*” hiss lies and deceit; and their venom is poisonous. These seed of “**the serpent**” killed many in the “**wilderness**”.

So, as B’nei Yisra’el repents and prays for deliverance, Moshe makes a serpent of “**nekhoshet**”, Strong’s #758, which literally translates as “**hardened copper**”; but, is translated as *brass* or *bronze* depending on the translation. “**Nekhoshet**” also means “**filthy**” or “**sinful**” allegorically. So, Moshe made a symbol or image of their sin in a “**shiny**” metal to represent the “**fiery serpent**” or “**hissing one**”. Were they not *hissing* about YHVH? He placed it on a pole, or stake and raised it up. The Hebrew term here is “*nun-samech*” or “**nase**”, which means to make as an “**ensign**”, a “**standard**”, or a “**banner**”; a “**thing lifted up**” for all to see.

This takes us right into our Brit Chadashah reading for this *parsha*. You see, Yahshua became “**sin**”, or that “**serpent**” for us and was impaled on a stake and “**lifted up**” as an “**ensign**” and a “**standard**” to all who would believe and look to Him, for our deliverance and healing. Yahshua spoke of this in **Yochanan / John 3:11-21**; “**Truly, truly, I say to you, We speak what We know and witness what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If you do not believe when I spoke to you about earthly matters, how are you going to believe when I speak to you about the heavenly matters? And no one has gone up into the heaven except He who came down from the heaven – the Son of Adam. And as Moshe lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Adam has to be lifted up, so that whoever is believing in Him should not perish but possess everlasting life. For Elohim so loved the world that He gave His only brought-forth Son, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but possess everlasting life. For Elohim did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not judged, but he who does not believe is judged already, because he has not believed in the Name of the only brought-forth Son of Elohim. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were wicked. For everyone who is practicing evil matters hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But the one doing the truth comes to the light, so that his works are clearly seen, that they have been wrought in Elohim.**” Yahshua repeats this in **Yochanan / John 12:32-33**; “**And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall draw all unto Myself.**” *This He said, signifying by what death He was about to die.*

So, through Yahshua, by Ruach HaKodesh, the “**knowledge**” and “**wisdom**” of YHVH Eloheinu are poured out on all of us who truly seek Him with all our heart. **1 Corinthians 1:20-31** ends our reading for this week with Sha’ul speaking; “**Where is the wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not Elohim made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of Elohim, the world through wisdom did not know Elohim, it pleased Elohim through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. And since Yehudim ask a sign, and Greeks seek wisdom, yet we proclaim Messiah impaled, to the Yehudim a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called – both Yehudim and Greeks – Messiah the power of Elohim and the wisdom of Elohim. For the foolishness of Elohim is wiser than men, and the weakness of Elohim is stronger than men. For look at your calling, brothers, that**

there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But Elohim has chosen the foolish matters of the world to put to shame the wise, and Elohim has chosen the weak of the world to put to shame the strong. And Elohim has chosen the low-born of the world and the despised, and the ones that are not, that He might bring to naught the ones that are, so that no flesh should boast in His presence. And of Him you are in Messiah Yahshua, who became for us wisdom from Elohim, righteousness also, and set-apartness and redemption, that, as it has been written, "He who boasts, let him boast in YHVH."

Baruch HaShem YHVH !