

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 166

**Chukat** | Through Torah Study One Merits Greatly

# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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## Parshat Chukat

### G-d Will Wipe Away Every Tear

As was his daily custom, the great Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky walked towards the synagogue, immersed in a deep Talmudic discussion.

Suddenly, a faint sound of sobbing reached his ears. Rabbi Abramsky paused from his studies and looked around to find the source of the crying. He noticed a little girl crying bitterly in the corner of the street.

"What's wrong, little girl? Why are you crying?" the rabbi asked the child.

"My friends insulted me. They told me I have a funny name," the girl replied tearfully.

"What's your name?" the rabbi asked.

The girl answered shyly.

"Tell your friends that Rabbi Abramsky says you have a very beautiful name?" the rabbi declared decisively.

A happy smile broke through the girl's tears. Behold, the rabbi himself said that she has a beautiful name?

Rabbi Abramsky continued on his way, and the girl happily returned to her friends.

Passersby on the street were surprised by the sight that unfolded before their eyes. Rabbi Abramsky, a great and well known leader and an immense Torah scholar, bothered to comfort a little girl about a trivial matter?

One of the witnesses to the scene quickly caught up with the rabbi.

"Excuse me, honorable rabbi," he addressed Rabbi Abramsky with respect and courtesy, "why did the rabbi bother to calm a little girl hurt by such a trivial matter?"

Rabbi Abramsky looked at the questioner directly: "Your approach is incorrect," he remarked. "To uplift the spirit of a Jewish girl –

**Parshat Chukat - Two Minutes of Kindness**

no matter the subject – is not a trivial matter."

Rabbi Abramsky continued to explain:

"It is said that in the future, G-d will wipe away tears from all faces. Who is greater than the King

of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He? If in the eyes of G-d, it is not considered insignificant to wipe away a tear from the face of a Jew – who are we to feel that it is beneath our dignity to wipe away a tear from the faces of those around us?"<sup>1</sup>

**Two Minutes of Kindness**

**In** the neighborhood of the great Rabbi Avraham Pam, head of Yeshivat 'Torah Vodaath' in the United States, lived an elderly Jewish man.

One day, that man fell ill and was taken to the hospital. When Rabbi Pam heard about his illness, he sent the elderly man a short letter, to inquire about his well-being and wish him a speedy recovery.

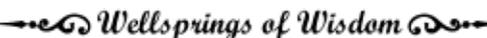
Rabbi Pam composed a letter of encouragement and strengthening and ended with warm blessings for a complete recovery soon. He then gave the letter to an acquaintance who would visit the patient in the hospital, and that, seemingly, was

the end of the matter.

When the elderly patient received the letter, his heart swelled with joy and excitement. A new light shone in his eyes, and now he didn't feel as sick and lonely.

A good feeling enveloped him: Rabbi Pam thought and cared for him?

With an emotional heart, the patient tucked the letter under his pillow. Every time a visitor entered his room, he would take out the important letter and present it to his visitor with an air of importance, as if it were a precious treasure. "Did you see?" he asked each of his guests admiringly -



1. 'Al Shelosha Devarim - Gemilut Chasadim' (page 264).

Parshat Chukat - Two Minutes of Kindness

"The great sage himself inquired about my well-being and wished me a complete recovery?"

The patient's visitors were also impressed by the honor he received. The elderly patient's reputation rose, and they looked at him with renewed appreciation. Rabbi Pam, one of the great Torah scholars of the time, bothered to send him such a friendly letter?

Only later, after the patient's passing, Rabbi Pam learned how precious his letter was to the patient's heart.

When Rabbi Pam was told how moved the patient was and how he cherished the letter as the apple of his eye, Rabbi Pam burst into bitter tears.

"Honorable rabbi," his close students asked anxiously, "why are you crying? You should be happy that you managed to lift the old man's spirits so much?"

Rabbi Pam shook his head and explained: I am crying because writing the letter was so easy and simple? It only took me two minutes to write it.

If I could do such great kindness in two minutes and bring so much joy to a lonely man - what can I say about all those minutes I didn't utilize properly? How can I justify the times when I didn't try to do acts of charity and kindness and revive the hearts of the oppressed?<sup>2</sup>

G-d demands that every Jew walk in His holy ways, through his actions and speech, and utilize all his capabilities and faculties to uplift others.<sup>3</sup>

It is for this purpose, that He commanded that a Jew put on tefillin every day, for it is through laying tefillin, that one merits to utilize these very powers that G-d has placed within him.

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*Wellsprings of Wisdom*

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2. 'Al Shelosha Devarim - Gemilut Chasadim' (page 261).
3. **There** have been many charitable individuals in the Jewish people, some

who remain unknown to this day, and those who were fortunate enough to have their deeds recorded in historical chronicles.

## Parshat Chukat - Two Minutes of Kindness

**One** such famous individual was Ben Kalba Savua.

**The** Talmud (Gittin 56a) asks: “Why was he called Ben Kalba Savua (the son of a satiated dog)?

**Because** anyone who entered his house hungry as a dog, left satiated and satisfied.”

**Feeding** the hungry is indeed a great and lofty virtue, however, there is an even higher virtue of ‘satisfying’ the emotions of others.

**Every** person in the world, regardless of age, education, or occupation feels a lack and a need with regard to their emotions.

**It** takes great sensitivity and wisdom to succeed in satisfying the emotions of every individual. This is because no two people have the same kind of hunger. Each person is a complete world unto themselves and emotions that characterize them alone.

**One** such person who had such sensitivity and wisdom was our father and teacher, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, of blessed memory.

**Rabbi** Yoram spent his entire life ‘satisfying’ the emotions of others in a most noble way.

**Throughout** the thirty years of his leadership, he met with people every day, some regularly and others only occasionally. It made no difference to him – he allowed everyone to approach and speak with him.

**He** truly listened, and the person would feel the genuine love in his heart.

**Rabbi** Yoram would then respond with a radiant face, an answer that seemed to descend from Above.

**Anyone** who was privileged to meet Rabbi Yoram never forgot the experience and the sweet feeling that there was a righteous Jew of high stature who loved them just as they are, and who held them in high esteem.

**Jews** from all walks of life, from the darkest souls to the most righteous Jews sought his closeness and longed to be in his presence.

**People** never tired of being in his company, and even though every Shabbat he would deliver four lessons (Friday night, Shabbat morning, afternoon, and following the Shabbat) that totaled about seven hours, people would attend all the lessons, week after week.

**Everyone** who came into contact with him felt how precious and loved they were to him, everyone was sure they were among the closest and most connected to him.

**For** most of the years of his leadership, he would leave his study hall every evening and travel to another location in Israel to deliver a lesson.

**In** these lessons, he would teach Torah, guide, and direct Jews to learn Torah and rectify their actions.

**In** those lessons he would assess the spiritual state of all the participants, and when he felt that there was some kind of judgment or decree against someone, he would strive with all his might to sweeten these judgments and draw down kindness.

## High-Tech Connections

**In** the early 1960s, at a time when the first mainframe computers began to appear, Professor Abraham Polichenko, a pioneer in computer technology, visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe and asked him:

"I know that everything in the world, including those things that will be revealed in the future, originate in the Torah. Therefore, I'd like to ask: Where is the concept of computers found in the Torah?"

The Lubavitcher Rebbe answered without hesitation: "In Tefillin."

The professor was surprised.

The Rebbe explained: "What is the actual innovation of the

computer? You enter a room and see devices familiar to you: a typewriter, a voice recorder, a television, and a calculator.

So, what innovation does the computer have that these devices don't?

Rather, beneath the surface in the computer, all these various types of devices are connected so that they work as one."

The professor's face lit up. He hadn't thought of the computer from that perspective before, but it's true - that's what the computer does: synthesizing, processing, and synchronizing media and devices.

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**At** the end of the lesson, Jews would approach him and pour out their hearts.

**Rabbi** Yoram would receive inquiries by fax machine, and with self-sacrifice, without sparing his time and energy, answered all the questions directed to him.

**He** continued this way until his untimely death.

**In** his final year on this earth, Rabbi Yoram spoke about frightening events that were to occur, and he repeatedly spoke and warned.

**Ultimately**, he sacrificed his life as an atonement to spare the public any harm or evil decree.

**Rabbi** Yoram had the infamous disease in the liver, and from the month of Elul until the 27<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, he endured great suffering, until sadly, he passed away.

**He** would often say: "I know that everyone needs protection, and I have taken upon myself to provide that protection."

**Parshat Chukat - Torah Chronology**

The Rebbe continued: “Now look at yourself. You have a brain that exists in its own world, a heart that exists in another world, and often, your hands are engaged in completely unrelated things. These three ‘devices’ operate on three completely different levels.”

The first thing you do in the morning is connect your head, heart, and hand through the tefillin straps so that everything integrates together for the

purpose of dedicating the mind and heart to G-d. Afterward, when you go out into the world, all your actions are done harmoniously towards a single, shared, and coordinated goal.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned, to empower and uplift the feelings of others is demanded from every Jew, but from Torah scholars, the demand is even higher.

Let us, however, start from the beginning.

**Torah Chronology**

**As** is known, there are 54 Torah portions in the Five Books of Moses. The first is Bereshit - and it begins with the world's creation.

The last is Vezot Haberachah - and ends with the passing of Moses.

Moses passed away on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar (or to some opinions, Adar I) in the year 2488 to the creation

of the world, it thus follows that the events written in the 54 Torah portions occurred over the previous 2488 years.<sup>5</sup>

We now will briefly detail the order of events as they are divided by the various Torah portions:

Parshat Bereishit encompasses ten generations: Adam, Seth,

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4. ‘Sipurim She'ahavti Lesaper’ (Part I - page 246) by Rabbi Tuvia Litzman.

5. **To** recall the words of the Vilna Gaon (‘The Gra’s Commentary on ‘Sifra D’Tzniuta’ Chapter 5):

“**Everything** that occurred with the patriarchs, Moses, and all of Israel, are relevant and reoccur in every generation, since the sparks of our ancestors reincarnate in every generation, as is known.

**Parshat Chukat - Torah Chronology**

Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. It encompasses the nearly 1500 years following creation.

Parshat Noach encompasses ten generations as well: Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abraham, all of whom lived in the period that lasted over the next 523 years.<sup>6</sup>

From the third Torah portion - Lech Lecha, until the end of the book of Genesis, we have ten

Torah portions, and in them, the Torah speaks of five generations: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, his 12 sons, and their children.

They lived in a period that transpired over the next 308 years.

We move on to the book of Exodus:

The first two chapters of Parshat Shemot encompass all the years of slavery in Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

From the third chapter of Parshat Shemot until the end of

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**The** same is true with all the deeds recorded from Adam until the end of the Torah; they, too, recur in every generation, as known to the initiated.

**It** is also true on the individual level as well.”

**Rabbi** Yaakov Edes, of blessed memory, emphasized (Divrei Yaakov - Torah Portions, page 2):

“**The** aforementioned idea of the Gra - that everything written in the Torah recurs in every generation and in every person, is a major principle in the study of all the events written in the Five Books of Moses, for beyond merely the study of the Torah written in them, there lies in them an interpretation to the all that befalls a person in his lifetime and in all his affairs.”

**6. After** the sin of the Generation of the Flood, the verse states:

"**And** the L-rd said, My spirit shall not constantly vie with man, being that he is only flesh: his days shall number a hundred and twenty years' (Genesis 6:3).

**For** this reason these second ten generations lived in total, only a third of the years of the ten previous generations.

**7.** It is not known precisely how many years the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. What is known is that the enslavement took place over a period no less than eighty-six years and not more than one hundred and sixteen years.

**Parshat Chukat - Torah Chronology**

Parshat Bo (which include three Torah portions: Shemot, Va'era, Bo), the ten plagues and the exodus from Egypt are all described - events that lasted for one year.

From Parshat Beshalach until the end of the book of Exodus, everything that happened to the Israelites in their first year of wandering in the desert is described.

During that year, they received the Torah yet unfortunately also sinned with the Golden Calf.

At the beginning of the second year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan, the Tabernacle was erected, as recorded in the Torah portion of 'Pekudei' (the last of the Book of Exodus): "And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the Tabernacle was erected" (Exodus 40:17).

It is stated in the Talmud (Shabbat 87b and Gittin 60a) that this day, the 1<sup>st</sup>

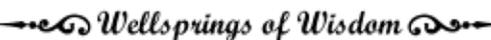
of Nisan, was an extraordinary day. On that day Moses was told eight sections of the Torah,<sup>8</sup> one of them being the laws of the red heifer.

The following day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Nisan, the first red heifer was burned, and through it, the Children of Israel were purified from the impurity of death, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the Children of Israel offered the Passover sacrifice.

Now, let's move on to the Book of Leviticus:

The Book of 'Leviticus' mostly deals with the laws of sacrifices, the laws of purity, and the laws of forbidden foods and forbidden relations.

The Maharit in 'Beit Elohim' ('Sha'ar Hayesodot' Chapter 32) notes that the entire Book of Leviticus was said to Moses within one month from the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan until the 1<sup>st</sup> of Iyar.



**8. To quote the Talmud:**

“**Rabbi** Levi said, eight sections of the Torah were declared on the day the Tabernacle was erected, namely:

**The** priests, the Levites, the impure, the sending away of the impure, after the death of Aaron's sons, those who have drunk wine, the lamps of the Menorah, and the red heifer.

**Parshat Chukat - Six Months in the Desert**

The Book of Numbers thus begins on the 1st of Iyar of the second year, where G-d counted the Children of Israel.

The first five Torah portions of the Book of Numbers: Bamidbar, Naso, Beha'alotcha, Shlach, and Korach, occurred during the first half of the second year.

However the subsequent 38 years of wandering in the desert, and all the travails and events of that period are not recorded in the Torah?<sup>9</sup>

It is only from the sixth Torah portion of the Book of Numbers, our Parshah of Chukat, and for the subsequent five Torah portions, until the end of the Book of Numbers, that the Torah

describes the events of the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Children of Israel's journey in the desert.

Finally, the last Book of Deuteronomy, was said entirely in the final 36 days of Moses's life in the wilderness:

The first seven portions (Devarim - Ki Tavo) were said over 35 days, and the last four Torah portions: Nitzavim, Vayelech, Ha'azinu, and V'zot Haberachah, were said by Moses on his last day - the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar.

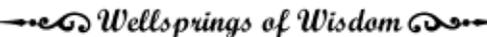
Now that we have arranged the general chronology of the Torah portions, we shall dwell on this week's Torah portion - Parshat Chukat.

**Six Months in the Desert**

**Parshat** Chukat describes the events that occurred in the fortieth year of their stay in the desert.

To briefly summarize the events brought in Parshat Chukat:

At the beginning of the fortieth year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan,



**9.** Rabbeinu Bachya wrote (Numbers 20:1) that all the various events recorded in the Torah that happened to our ancestors in the

desert occurred either in the first year after their exodus from Egypt or in the fortieth year, meaning in one of these two years.

**Parshat Chukat - Six Months in the Desert**

the Children of Israel arrived at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.

Ten days later (on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan), Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died and was buried in Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.<sup>10</sup>

Once Miriam passed away, the wellspring they all relied upon disappeared. The Children of Israel approached the basin to wash their hands and lo and behold there was no water, The well water had vanished?

The verse states: "And Miriam died there and was buried. And there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered together against Moses and Aaron" (Numbers 20:1).

The Children of Israel entered a state of extreme distress and began to dispute with Moses: "And the people quarreled with Moses, saying: 'Why have you brought the congregation of G-d

to this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die, and why have you brought us out of Egypt?" (ibid. verses 3-5)

Moses saw the immense sorrow of the Children of Israel and prayed to G-d.

G-d said to him: "Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, you, and Aaron, your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes." (ibid. verse 8)

The will of G-d, was that Moses should speak to the rock that it yield its water, and thus sanctify the Name of G-d, before the eyes of Israel.

However, in practice, Moses did not speak to the rock but struck it, as it is written: "Moses lifted up his hand, and struck the rock with his rod twice; and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock did as well" (ibid. verse 11).

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**10. In** the words of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, section 580:2):

**“On** the first of Nisan, Aaron's

sons died. On the tenth of the month, Miriam died and her wellspring disappeared”

**Parshat Chukat - Six Months in the Desert**

For this act of striking the rock instead of speaking to it, the Holy One, blessed be He, took offense at him and said: "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (ibid. verse 12)

As a result of the sin of striking the rock, it was decreed that Moses and Aaron would remain in the desert and not merit to enter the Land of Israel.

While the nation of Israel was in Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom to request permission to pass through his territory to reach the land of Canaan.

The king of Edom replied, unequivocally: "You shall not pass by me, lest I come out against you with the sword?" (ibid. verse 18).

The Children of Israel were then forced to go around the land of Edom, which prolonged their journey.

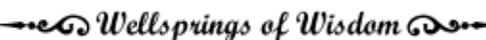
On the 1<sup>st</sup> of Av, they arrived at Mount Hor, where Aaron passed away. The hearts of the Children of Israel were filled with immense sorrow and great pain as stated in the later verses: "And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, all the house of Israel" (ibid. verse 29).

Following Aaron's death, the Clouds of Glory departed.

When the Canaanite king of Arad heard that the protective Clouds of Glory had departed, he rubbed his hands in glee and went out against them in battle, which ultimately ended in his defeat.

The following is excerpted from 'Otzar Aggadot HaTorah'<sup>11</sup> (vol. 3, Page 182):

After the nation of Israel realized that without the Clouds of Glory they were not feared by the surrounding nations as before, they decided to return to Egypt, and returned eight legs of the journey from Mount Hor to Moserah.



11. By Rabbi Israel Yaakov Klapholtz, of blessed memory.

## Parshat Chukat - Six Months in the Desert

The Levites, who were angry that Israel lacked faith and had weak hearts, pursued them to prevent them from carrying out their plan, and caught up with them in Moserah, where a fierce battle broke out, and eight family lineages fell in battle: five families from the tribe of Benjamin, one from Simeon, one from Gad, and one from the tribe of Asher.

One family was completely erased from the Levites, while three families were reduced in size.

In the end, however, the Levites prevailed and proved that it was foolish to return to the house of bondage.

Afterward, the Children of Israel continued on their journey, and then they complained about the Manna and the water, and G-d sent among them fiery serpents:

"And the people spoke against G-d, and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water, and we despise this unworthy bread. And G-d sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the

people, and many people from Israel died.'" (Numbers 21:5-6)

From there, they continued on their way to the land of Israel without Miriam and Aaron, but even so, they lacked nothing, for, by the merit of Moses, the well and the Clouds of Glory returned to them.

The inhabitants of the land of Israel - the Amorites - sent scouts to follow the Children of Israel. They reported that the Children of Israel would pass through a stream between two high mountains.

Quickly, they organized for action, and elite commando units were sent, and positioned themselves at the mountain tops with arrows and stone slingers, waiting for the Children of Israel to pass.

However, the Amorites did not know that the Ark of Covenant went ahead of the camp of Israel, leveling the way, lowering the mountains and raising the valleys.

Thus, before the Children of Israel reached the two mountains, the mountains clung to each other and paved a straight path for them, crushing to death all the Amorites

Parshat Chukat - Six Months in the Desert

hiding within them, and their blood and crushed bodies flowed down into the stream running between the two mountains and spilled out.

After the Jewish nation had passed, the mountains returned to their original place, and the well descended into the stream, bringing up the blood and limbs of the slain, and leading them around the camp. When the nation of Israel saw this, they immediately understood the great miracle G-d had done for them, and opened with song.

The Children of Israel continued northward, along the eastern border of the land of Israel, and reached the territory of Sihon in the month of Elul.

Once again Moses sent messengers, this time to the king of Sihon, requesting permission to pass through his land.

Like the king of Edom, Sihon replied negatively and went to war against Israel. The Children of Israel fought back fiercely, conquered the land of Sihon, and at the beginning of the month of Tishrei, they all were camped on the border of Bashan, under the rule of Og the giant.

The Children of Israel, with feelings of awe, celebrated the Ten Days of Repentance, and with immense joy celebrated the Sukkot festival.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Tishrei, the Children of Israel went to war against Og, whom they defeated with Divine assistance.

The Children of Israel continued their journey northward and camped in the plains of Moab opposite Jericho.<sup>12</sup>

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**12. The** Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, wrote ('Sha'ashuim Yom Yom' Vol. 2, page 241):

**'In** Parshat Chukat, there are ten topics or stories, corresponding to 'the ten sefirot,' namely:

**The** red heifer, the death of Miriam, the striking of the rock, Israel's request to

pass through the land of Edom, the death of Aaron, the war against the Canaanite king of Arad, the bronze serpent, the crossing of the Arnon passes, the song of the well, the war against Sihon and Og.

**If** we count the war against Sihon and against Og separately, then we have eleven topics. See there further.

## The Commandment of the Red Heifer

**We** have summarized the entirety of Parshat Chukat aside for the first aliyah (section).

At the beginning of the Torah portion, we are commanded about the red heifer, whose purpose is to purify anyone who has become impure through contact with a corpse.

Anyone who became impure through contact with a corpse is forbidden to enter the Temple, as well as to eat consecrated items,<sup>13</sup> and if he is a priest, is also forbidden to eat Tithes, and the like.

To be purified from his impurity, he must be sprinkled with the ashes of the red heifer.

This all is recorded in the first section of the Torah portion.

One cannot but wonder why these laws and details of the red heifer are written here, in our portion of Chukat, which occurred in the 40<sup>th</sup> year, while G-d commanded this at the beginning of the second year?

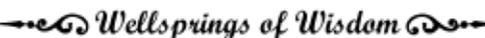
Indeed, many answers have been given for this, and we will bring one such explanation.

## The Red Heifer - A Bearer of Contradictions

**The** Torah portion of the red heifer opens with the verse: "This is the statute of the law which the L-rd has commanded, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and they shall bring you a complete red heifer, without a blemish, upon which there never was a yoke" (Numbers 19:2).

The commandment of the red heifer is a 'chok', a 'statute'. That is, we do not have a rational explanation for its observance.

Rashi writes in his commentary: 'This is the statute of the Torah' - The Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, What is this commandment, and what



13. There were holy items and sacrifices that were also eaten by the Israelites.

reason is there for it? Therefore, the Torah writes 'statute', 'I have decreed it, and you have no right to question it?'

One of the aspects that isn't understandable is that it bears contradictions - with the same action, it performs two opposite actions? It purifies the impure, yet defiles the pure.<sup>14</sup>

In the red heifer lies a deep and hidden power from which life and purity spring forth to counter the impurity of death, yet it brings impurity to those who engage in its preparation.

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh explained:<sup>15</sup>

As is well known, the Torah is eternal. It applies forever, and even today, in our times when the Temple is destroyed, and we have neither a priest nor a Temple, neither a sacrifice nor offering, nonetheless, all matters that were practiced in the Temple are still relevant.

The inner meaning of the impurity of death is the sadness and the falsehood of the unholy powers that truly have no life, and this melancholy kills all spirit of life and suppresses every desire for rectification and creation.<sup>16</sup>

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**14. In** the words of Rabbeinu Ovadia Sforno: 'This is the statute of the Torah which the L-rd has commanded' (Numbers 19:2) - "Behold our sages have already said, that for this reason it is called a 'statute', for it 'is a decree before me, and you have no right to deliberate regarding it.'

**King** Solomon the wise said about it: 'I said, I will gain insight, but it is far from me' (Ecclesiastes 7:23), and one of the main points here is that it contaminates the pure and purifies the contaminated.

**Nonetheless**, through our understanding of the entirety of the commandment, we may glean something and learn."

**See** there for more elaboration on the topic.

**15.** 'Lichyot Im Hazman' (Bamidbar, page 160).

**16. One** who is 'impure' by nature, does not have the strength to rise and initiate something of value in life; they are indifferent, and live in a false sense of lowliness.

**The** 'impure' does not truly 'live', life passes by them, and they stand on the side and look on with indifference with laziness and heaviness.

**Parshat Chukat - The Red Heifer Represents the Entire Torah**

This sadness originates from the anxiety and glum feeling of seeing how days and years pass and everything seemingly goes to oblivion upon the end of all physical life.

This feeling of the mortality and the finiteness of human life, leads to the true recognition of spiritual infiniteness and immortality of the life of the soul and the boundless spiritual worlds.

Thus, the cure and purification from this impurity also come from that very place, from the source beyond life, from the mysteries of the world to come.

Joy and vitality come to a soul that understands its primary

existence is there, in the spiritual rehat it is heading to, from where its life will be reneure with the revival of the dead.

Thus, the secret of revival is precisely like the ashes of the red heifer, which purifies the impure and defiles the pure.

Death, in which the individual ceases to exist as it knows itself, and the nothingness to which the known and familiar seems to disintegrate, is also the source of new life that will sprout from within it in the future.

We continue to delve deeper in this theme.

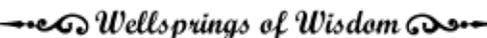
**The Red Heifer Represents the Entire Torah**

**Rabbi** Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov writes ('Degel Machaneh Ephraim' on Parshat Chukat):<sup>17</sup>

The Torah begins the portion of the red heifer with the words: "This is the statute of the Torah"

(Numbers 19:2), seemingly it should have stated: "This is the statute of the red heifer"?

However, the Torah wished to teach us that there is a deep connection between the secret



17. In the name of the great Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, of blessed memory.

**Parshat Chukat - Torah Scholars as Holy as the Torah**

within the red heifer and the Torah itself.

Just as the red heifer contains these two opposites, purifying the impure and defiling the pure, the Torah also contains these opposites.

As the Talmud states (Yoma 72b): Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, what is meant by the verse: "And this is the law which Moses set" (Deuteronomy 4:44)?

It should not be interpreted as 'sam' - 'set,' but rather as 'sam' - 'medicine' (they share the same Hebrew root), teaching us that if a person merits, the Torah becomes a medicine of life for him, but if not, it becomes a deadly poison.

There are two opposite forces within the Torah, and the same study itself, can bring life to one and yet the opposite, G-d forbid, to another?

**Torah Scholars as Holy as the Torah**

**Every** Jew who merits studying the Torah out of love and fear of G-d, with an inner and heartfelt intention to become

a chariot for the holiness of G-d, becomes attached to the Torah, tasting the elixir of life within it.<sup>18</sup>

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**18. The** final book of the Tanach is the Book of Chronicles, which recounts the entire chronology of the world from the world's creation to the destruction of the First Temple.

**In** the last chapter (II Chronicles 36), which describes the burning of the Temple, it is said:

**“And** the L-rd, G-d of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, from morning till night; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place.

**But** they mocked the messengers of G-d, and despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the L-rd ascended against his people, till there was no remedy.” (ibid 15-16).

**The** Talmud (Shabbat 119b) learns from this that the cause of the destruction of the First Temple was the disrespect and insult of the Torah scholars.

**To** quote the Talmud:

**“Rabbi** Judah said, “Jerusalem was only destroyed because they insulted the Torah

**Parshat Chukat - Torah Scholars as Holy as the Torah**

Over time, with determination and deep study, and through battling against the evil inclination and overcoming many

trials he merits to become unified with the Torah, becoming holy as the Torah scroll itself - his body like the casing of the scroll,

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

scholars in it. As it is said: 'But they mocked the messengers of G-d, and despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the L-rd ascended against his people, till there was no remedy.'"

**What** does 'till there was no remedy' mean? Rav Judah said in the name of Rav: Whoever insults Torah scholars, there is no remedy for his wound."

**Maimonides** similarly rules (Laws of Torah Study 6:11):

**'It** is a great sin to insult the scholars or to hate them, and Jerusalem was not destroyed until they insulted the Torah scholars in it. Whoever insults the scholars has no portion in the World to Come and is considered to have 'despised the word of the L-rd.'

**When** the great sage Rabbi Chaim Yoseph David Azulai - the Chida - learned this, the words of the famous Talmud passage (Yoma 9b) appeared before his eyes:

**"Why** was the First Temple destroyed? Because of the three transgressions then: idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed."

**His** forehead furrowed with wrinkles as he attempted to understand how these two Talmud passages can be reconciled.

**He** recorded his explanation ('Mar'it Ha'ayin, Shabbat 119b), and this is the gist of it:

**'The** First Temple was destroyed because of the three transgressions, idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed, but the root of these transgressions was the disrespect they showed to the scholars.

**The** destruction was ultimately caused by their not listening to the voice of their teachers and prophets, straying from their discipline, and not behaving according to their words.

**If** the scholars had been respected in their eyes, they would have sought their closeness and listened to their words, and consequently, they would not have fallen into these vile sins.

**When** Isaiah the prophet saw the disrespect that the people of Israel showed towards the scholars of Israel, he lamented: 'How has the faithful city become a harlot' (Isaiah 1:21) - the meaning of the word 'zona' - 'harlot' is to have gone off and lose one's way.

**Isaiah** lamented that they had gone astray and were mistaken without recognizing the way and without listening to a spiritual guide.

Parshat Chukat - Torah Scholars as Holy as the Torah

and his soul like the Torah scroll itself.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, he too merits to bear opposites, containing within him both the elixir of life and of death.

This explains what Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak said (Talmud Yoma 22b):

“A Torah scholar who is not vengeful and bears a grudge like a snake is not a Torah scholar.”

To explain:

The soul of every person contains three levels: intellect, emotion, and instincts.

Although there are vast differences between people regarding levels of intellect, concerning the level of emotion, they all more or less exist within the same realm. Thus, every person can, more or less, feel and relate to what is in the heart of another.

Therefore, as aforementioned, it is expected from every Jew to uplift and be sensitive to the feelings of others.

We might think that while a Torah scholar may achieve unity with the Torah, this is only true with regard to their intellect, but their emotional level remains like that of all other people.

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**19. To** quote the great Rabbi Yoel Sirkes, of blessed memory (Bach, Orach Chaim 47:2):

“**G-d’s** intention has forever been that we engage in Torah study, so that our soul be empowered with the essence, spirituality, and holiness of the source of the Torah. Therefore G-d, gave the Torah of truth to Israel as a gift so it would not be forgotten from us and that our soul and body, with its 248 limbs and 365 sinews be bound by the 248 positive and the 365 negative commandments of the Torah.

**If** one engages in Torah study with this intention, they become a chariot and a sanctuary for the Divine Presence, and they serve as a sanctuary of G-d. Within them, the Shechinah resides and establishes its dwelling, and the whole earth shines from His glory.

**Thus,** there would be a connection between the Heavenly and Earthly assembly, and the sanctuary for the Divine would be united as one.”

**See** there further at length, crucial points that all who study Torah should know.

**Parshat Chukat - Torah Scholars as Holy as the Torah**

To prevent us from making such an error, Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak reveals to us:

Know that their emotional level is entirely different, they are at total unity with the Torah, and their love for Israel exists in all its strength.

Their love for their fellow Jew fills their entire being, and all their 248 limbs and 365 sinews are aflame with this fire of love.<sup>20</sup>

It is this love leads them to be vengeful and protective as a snake, for this love generates within them a sense of responsibility and they therefore strive with all their might and with all the powers that G-d has endowed them with to be protectors of the people of Israel

in general, and of every individual Jew in particular.<sup>21</sup>

As the prophet Isaiah described: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are young" (Isaiah 40:11).

This love leads him to risk himself and go to war against those forces that wish to harm the people of Israel

When he identifies a heavenly decree, G-d forbid, or other spiritual threats, he becomes like a snake, taking revenge from his enemies and cutting off all negative forces in Heaven and Earth.

Now we can understand why the red heifer is discussed specifically in Parshat Chukat.

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

**20.** When a person is angry, he feels the anger in all of his 248 limbs and 365 sinews. Similarly, the righteous feel with an even greater intensity, love for their fellow Jew, who are all a

part of the greater body of the Jewish nation.

**21.** As stated in the Song of Songs: 'They appointed me as a guard over the vineyards' (1:6).

Parshat Chukat - "Make yourself a fiery serpent"

**"Make yourself a fiery serpent"**

**Rabbi** Yitzchak Ginsburgh writes:<sup>22</sup>

The Torah portion of Chukat is not the longest of the Torah portions, but it is among the most varied and loaded with diverse subjects.

It opens with the subject of the red heifer, the 'statute' about which the wisest of all men said: "I said, 'I will be wisened,' but it is far from me" (Ecclesiastes 7:23), a sealed and hidden mystery from which life and purity emanate for those with the impurity of death, yet also causes those who engage with it to become gravely impure.

In the continuation of the Torah portion, various stories about the Israelites' experiences just before entering the land are presented. There seems to be no other portion in the Torah that contains as many diverse stories.

Miriam was the first of the three shepherds taken away in one year.

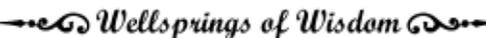
After her departure, the well that came to us in her merit - 'Miriam's well' - disappeared, and there was no water for the congregation. The crisis that ensued and our sins, caused death also to be decreed upon the other two shepherds, Moses and Aaron.

Aaron's departure also led to a severe crisis - "And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, heard." (Numbers 21:1)

He heard that Aaron had died and the clouds of glory had disappeared, and assumed it was an opportune time to fight Israel.

The Israelites experienced a 'crisis' and sought to return to Egypt, retracing their steps for eight journeys. The sons of Levi saw this and pursued them. They ended up killing each other until the Levites prevailed and they all returned to mourn Aaron.

Miriam the prophetess had her spiritual path, through which



22. 'Lichyot Im Hazman' (Volume 4 - page 157).

**Parshat Chukat - "Make yourself a fiery serpent"**

she drew abundance to all of Israel, in the form of a well.

Aaron the priest had his spiritual path, through which he drew abundance to all of Israel, in the form of clouds of glory.

After their death, these paths were blocked, and the conduit was hidden.

Yet Moses, our teacher, felt a sense of responsibility, for his role was to guard like a serpent, and he therefore girded his loins and exerted himself in his formidable task until he succeeded in reopening the two conduits of abundance.

Not many days passed, and the people of Israel faltered yet again in their speech, and a terrible accusation was aroused against them, and deadly and fiery serpents were seen crawling in every corner of the camp.

Moses felt a sense of responsibility, for his role was to be avenger like a serpent, to subdue the accusers and to sweeten the judgments.

G-d commanded him: "Make yourself a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and everyone that was bitten, when he looked upon it, would live" (Numbers 21:8).

And so it was.

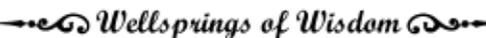
This explains the question that we asked earlier.

Since this portion brings to expression the lofty and great stature of the Torah scholars, chief among them Moses, our Torah portion begins with the commandment of the red heifer.

For this reveals to us what power Moses had to succeed in prevailing and being responsible for all these matters brought in our Torah portion.

Just as the red heifer embodied two opposite forces within it, so too, Moses, the ultimate Torah scholar carried within him two opposite forces:

A deadly poison<sup>23</sup> - to the enemies of G-d, and a life-giving elixir - to the people of Israel?



**23.** The Talmud (Yoma 22b) establishes that a Torah scholar who is not vengeful and bears a grudge like a snake is not a Torah scholar.

## How Can One Merit Unity?

**Those** with warm Jewish hearts may be filled with yearnings and longings, "When will I too merit to experience the presence of G-d" ?

When will I also merit unity with the Torah ?

While, as is known, this task is immense and requires significant purification, there is nonetheless a way that one can merit to purify his soul and illuminate it with a wondrous light.

The way to accomplish this is to rise for the study of Torah in the wee hours of the night.

To quote from 'Chelev Ha'aretz' (Part 1 - Page 150):

Our sages have extensively described the great virtue and immense reward of a person who engages in Torah study.

This applies to all Torah study, but a Jew who meditates and learns Torah from midnight onwards merits an unparalleled reward, greater than any other study.

As the Talmud states (Tamid 32b): Rabbi Chiya taught, anyone who engages in Torah study at night, the Shechinah is found opposite him, as it is written: "Arise, cry out in the night, at the start of the night watch" (Lamentations 2:19).

Since the Shechinah is opposite him, he is protected from transgression, and no sin comes through him.

The Zohar (Lech Lecha 77b) explains that one who studies Torah at these exalted hours, merits that G-d and the celestial assembly, listen to the voice of his Torah study.

This is the inner meaning of the verse: "My friends listen to your voice" (Song of Songs 8:13) - 'My friends', refers to the righteous in the Garden of Eden, 'listen to your voice' - to the voice of Torah from one studying it at that time in this world.

Not only does G-d listen to the voice of one studying Torah at that time, but He also quiets all the celestial assembly above, that

**Parshat Chukat - How Can One Merit Unity?**

they also listen to that study of Torah in this world.

Moreover, the Talmud (Menachot 110b) states: Torah scholars who engage in Torah at night are credited as if they were

engaged in the sacrifices of the Temple, soon to be rebuilt, as it is said: "A Song of Ascents. Behold, bless you the L-rd, all you servants of the L-rd, which by night stand in the house of the L-rd" (Psalms 134:1).

**Shabbat Shalom!**



## Summary and Practical Conclusions

**1.** The ultimate purpose of studying Torah is that we merit to become a chariot to G-d.

This is accomplished by strengthening our soul and connecting to the essence and holiness of the Torah during the study.

Through this, we become a chariot and a temple for His divine presence to dwell within us, for every Jew is a temple of G-d and worthy of His divine presence dwelling within him.

**2.** Every Jew who merits to study Torah out of love and fear of G-d, from an inner intention and heartfelt devotion through which he merits to become a throne and chariot for His holiness, becomes attached to the Torah, and tastes the elixir of life in it.

**3.** After many years of studying Torah in-depth and with great diligence, and exerting oneself in the struggle against the evil

inclination, and overcoming all hardships, one merits to become holy like a Torah scroll - his body like the case of the scroll, and his soul like the Torah itself.

**4.** When a Jew merits complete unification with the Torah, then, at the point of unification with the Torah, the love of his fellow Jew is revealed. The love of Israel fills his entire being, and all his 248 limbs and 365 sinews are ablaze and burn with the fire of love. This love generates within him a great sense of responsibility for every Jew.

**5.** One of the ways to merit and achieve complete unification with the Torah is by rising at midnight and engaging in Torah study. A Jew who meditates on the Torah after midnight, his reward is great and immense beyond comparison to any other study, and he merits that the Divine Presence is before him; thus, he is guarded from sin, and no sin comes through him.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



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every Jew, wherever he is, receives from G-d at the time of prayer a gift called **"Mochin D'Gadlut,"** meaning that the understanding of everything is expansive before him, as is written  
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## Shabbat Times Chukat

7<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, 5784



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	8:09 pm	9:16 pm	9:39 pm
Miami	7:57 pm	8:53 pm	9:27 pm
Los Angeles	7:48 pm	8:49 pm	9:18 pm
Montreal	8:24 pm	9:36 pm	9:53 pm
Toronto	8:40 pm	9:50 pm	10:10 pm
London	8:56 pm	10:22 pm	10:25 pm
Jerusalem	7:32 pm	8:21 pm	9:17 pm
Tel Aviv	7:29 pm	8:18 pm	9:13 pm
Haifa	7:30 pm	8:19 pm	9:14 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:27 pm	8:16 pm	9:10 pm

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*Each and every time one conquers their evil inclination and their habits, even slightly - for example, one who regularly learns Torah for 3 hours and adds even 5 minutes to their study - they conquer and subdue the evil powers and is victorious.*

*As our sages declare: "One who reviews his study 100 times, cannot compare to one who reviews his study 101 times" (Chagigah 9b).*

*The Ba'al Hatanya explains (Tanya, chapter 15), that in their times, it was their habit to review their Torah study 100 times, and this one additional review of the study that is beyond their regular habit is comparable to all their previous studies and even outweighs them.*



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