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Parsha

Chukat-Balak

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Gematria on the Parshah: The Secret of Parah Adumah

By: Reb Moshe Herskovits



Parshat Chukat contains the famous mystery of the Parah Adumah. The ashes of the Parah are sprinkled to purify one who has come in contact with the dead, yet the one who carries the ashes becomes impure. The mitzvah is so deep that Shlomo HaMelech, who had 3,000 parables for every idea in the Torah, couldn't fully understand it.

What does gematria and Chassidus reveal about the secret of Parah Adumah? And what can it teach us about our lives?

Parah Adumah is a Tikkun for the Original Sin

Parah Adumah is called the ultimate chok, a law that goes above rationale. This is one reason, metaphorically, why it purifies. The Ben Ish Chai explains that tikkun, rectification for sin, is achieved by doing the opposite. A Jew's ultimate tikkun is to rectify the original sin of the Nachash and Chava. Chava ended up sinning because she was swayed by the Nachash's arguments, by rationale. The tikkun, then, is to serve Hashem beyond rationality.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches that true Avodat Hashem is serving Hashem beyond understanding, because this makes the relationship unconditional. Remarkably, the gematria of חקת (decree, mitzvah above logic) is 508 it is the same as עבודת השם (service of Hashem) and ובכל נפשך (with one's entire soul). This is true service of Hashem: when the neshamah serves beyond the mind, revealing the neshamah's unconditional love for Hashem.

The Ashes of the Para: Lesson in Humility

The purification of the Parah comes through burning it into ashes. Ashes represent humility. Chazal says the Parah "metameh tehorem u'metaher temeim," it makes the pure impure and the impure pure. The gematria of מטמא (it purifies the impure) is 354 the same as דשן (ashes). This teaches that the purification of the Parah comes from regarding oneself as humble as ashes, which is expressed through truly trusting Hashem.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman gives a parable of the importance of trusting in Hashem. A king once sent his minister to the palace of another king, warning him beforehand: "this king loves to gamble and make wagers, and no matter how tempting the bet sounds, do not take it." The minister arrived, and after discussing politics, the host king asked if he could pose a personal question.

"What is it like to be a hunchback?" The minister, taken aback, replied that he had back problems but was no hunchback. "You can admit the truth," the king pressed. "Tell you what, I'll bet you a million dollars you're a hunchback." The minister, certain of the easy win, agreed, and collected his million. Returning home, he proudly told his king what happened. The king groaned. "You fool. You should have trusted me. I bet that king two million dollars you wouldn't take the wager." This is the lesson of the Parah Adumah as a chok. The Alter Rebbe teaches that every mitzvah must be approached this way, not as a calculation we can fully grasp, but as an act of trust in a wisdom far beyond our own.

The Connection Between Parah Adumah and Har Sinai

Chazal teach that Parah Adumah is a tikkun for Cheit HaEgel (the sin of the Golden Calf). The Zohar adds that at Har Sinai, when Am Yisrael heard the Aseret HaDibrot, the impurity of the yetzer hara left them entirely. Remarkably, the gematria of פרה אדמה (Reid Heifer) is 335 it is the same as רוח נמוכה (a lowly spirit). Like Har Sinai, the Parah Adumah has the power to remove the impurity of the yetzer hara.

How so? The greatness of Am Yisrael at Har Sinai was that they said Naasei before Nishma, "we will do" before "we will understand." The word Naasei carries two reasons why Parah Adumah parallels Har Sinai.

First, as above, Naasei reflects serving Hashem beyond rationality, the very idea expressed by Chukat and the Parah Adumah.

Second, Naasei represents ahavat Yisrael and achdut. The Zohar connects the Naasei of Har Sinai to the original "Naasei Adam BiTzalmeynu Kidmuneinu" (Let us make man in our image, after our likeness). Man's purpose is to realize he is part of a "we," not just an "I," that all of Am Yisrael is one being. The Ruzhiner Rebbe says that when Mashiach comes, looking at another Jew's face will no longer feel like looking at someone else. It will feel like looking at yourself.

This is the final message of the Parah. Rav Yitzchak Vorker teaches that the Parah Adumah is the ultimate expression of ahavat Yisrael: the one who carries the ashes becomes impure in order to purify another. The Parah represents not just unconditional trust in Hashem, but unconditional love for Am Yisrael. This is the goal Hashem wants us to reach, and why the discovery of a new Parah Adumah is said to herald the times of Mashiach, when all of Yisrael will truly be one.

For more, check out Gematria Torah on YouTube. Have a great Shabbos!

What If Your Struggle Is Hiding Your Greatest Light?

By: Reb Adam Klasner



A chok is something that cannot be fully understood. It resists explanation. It refuses to fit neatly into the boxes of logic.

And perhaps that is exactly why this parsha feels so relevant.

Most of us spend our lives trying to make sense of things. We want clarity. We want answers. We want to know why something happened, why someone left, why a relationship failed, why we struggle with the same patterns over and over again.

We want life to make sense.

But then life introduces us to mystery.

A loss we cannot explain.

A wound we cannot understand.

A challenge that arrives without permission.

A part of ourselves that remains hidden despite years of effort.

This is where the story of Moshe striking the rock becomes deeply personal.

The class explored a fascinating idea. Had Moshe spoken to the rock, the water would have emerged easily. Instead, he struck the rock. According to the Zohar, that moment introduced a different kind of relationship with wisdom. Not the wisdom that comes through clarity, but the wisdom that comes through struggle.

Many of us spend years trying to avoid our pain.

We distract ourselves.

We stay busy.

We focus on achievement.

We build identities that protect us from having to feel what is underneath.

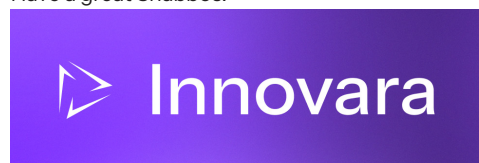
But eventually life brings us to the rock.

The place inside ourselves that feels hard, blocked, closed, and inaccessible.

And often we discover that beneath that rock is water.

Beneath the fear is longing.

Beneath the anger is hurt.



Beneath the shame is innocence.

Beneath the coping mechanism is a part of us that has been waiting to be seen for years.

The painful truth is that some of the deepest growth comes when life forces us off the first mountain.

The first mountain is achievement, success, image, and approval.

The second mountain is authenticity.

It is the place where we stop asking, "How do I look?" and start asking, "Who am I really?"

The place where we stop performing and begin listening.

The place where we stop protecting ourselves and begin meeting ourselves.

None of us would choose the struggles that shaped us.

Yet many of us can look back and see that the moments we wanted to erase became the doorway to the deepest parts of our soul.

Not because suffering is the goal.

But because hidden beneath the struggle was a wellspring we never would have discovered otherwise.

The question this week is not: "Why did this happen to me?"

The question is:

What water might be hidden beneath the rock I'm avoiding?

Look Up And Live!

By: Rabbi Avrohom Jacks



All it takes to stop a poisonous snake from ruining your life is to LOOK UP.

In this week's Torah portion, Chukas, the Jewish people find themselves under attack by deadly desert snakes. The cure comes by way of a strange instruction from G-d to Moses. Moses is commanded to mount a copper snake on a high pole and have everyone look up at the image of the copper serpent.

The moment they look up at the snake, they are instantly healed. Now, to be sure, the copper snake did not possess any inherent power to heal from a distance. The actual transformation happened because the person lifted their eyes toward heaven and bound their heart to G-d.

When a person is bitten by a snake, their attention naturally locks onto their wound. All they can focus on is the agony of the attack. When we experience any pain, our minds tend to replay the injury on a loop. We analyze the snakes that bite us and curse them for the wounds they inflict. All the while, the venom does its work. The more we stare at the source of our pain, the more power we give it.

Something may be biting you right now. Maybe it

is a financial fear. Maybe it is a voice in your head that has been whispering you are not enough. You have been trying to wrestle this thing on its level, and you are losing because the antidote does not exist on the ground where the bite happened. The remedy exists in the elevation of your mindset.

So look up. Right now. Allow your soul to gaze at loftier vistas. Shift your perspective and remind yourself that G-d is watching over you with infinite love. He has placed a pole of healing in your sky, and all He is asking is that you turn your face toward Him. You were never meant to fight in the dark by yourself. The same heart that has been clenched in fear can soften in that one glance. The same soul that has been bitten can be flooded with healing in one instant of trust. Just one glance and everything changes. So, look up and truly live!

All from Hashem

By: Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski



In Parshas Chukas, following the people's complaint against Hashem and Moshe, venomous snakes break out among the camp. Hashem's prescribed cure is puzzling at first: Moshe fashions a copper snake and mounts it on a pole, and anyone bitten needs only look at it to live (Bamidbar 21:9). The Mishnah anticipates the obvious question; does a copper snake really cause death or give life? No, rather, when Israel directs their hearts upward, toward their Father in Heaven, they are healed (Rosh Hashana 3:8). So if the snake itself does nothing, why use a snake at all? Why not any other object?

The Ramban explains that this is one of the deliberate ways of the Torah; healing the illness by means of the cause of the sickness (Ramban, Bamidbar 21:9). And this choice is intentional to remove any confusion about the true source of the healing: it is only Hashem.

The Ramban notes that this same pattern appears earlier, in Parshas Beshalach. The Bnei Yisrael arrive at Marah, unable to drink its bitter water. Hashem shows Moshe a tree to cast into the water, and it becomes sweet (Shmos 15:25). One reading is that the tree had natural sweetening properties. But the Ramban records a second opinion: the tree itself was bitter. Bitter sweetening bitter - a miracle within a miracle - precisely to make known that it is Hashem Who sweetens the bitter, not the tree.

The same principle surfaces a third time in Parshas Korach. After the rebellion is put down, a plague breaks out. Moshe instructs Aharon to take the Ketores and run with it into the congregation and the plague stops. The Rashbam notes the irony: the very Ketores that had killed 250 men for offering it without authorization now gives life in the hands of the Kohen (Rashbam, Bamidbar 17:13). Nothing about the incense changed except who wielded it, and by extension, whose power it represented; Hashem's.

Across all three episodes - the copper snake, the bitter tree, the Ketores - the Torah encodes the same message: **כִּי אֲנִי ה' רִפְּאֵךְ** - For I am Hashem, your Healer (Shmos 15:26).

As we enter Shabbat, the question is simple: Am I

still staring at someone else's staff, or am I finally ready to become the person Hashem created me to be?

Faith Beyond Understanding

By: Reb Yacov Aboudi



Parashat Chukat opens with the enigmatic words, **"וְזֶאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה"** (במדבר יט:יב) "This is the decree of the Red Heifer," but rather, **"וְזֶאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה"** (במדבר יט:יב) "This is the decree of the Torah." Chazal teach that the Parah Adumah is not merely one mitzvah among many, but the paradigm through which we learn how to approach all of Torah.

Regarding this mitzvah, Shlomo HaMelech declared, **"אֲמַרְתִּי אֲחַכְמָה וְהָיָה רְחוּקָה מִמֶּנִּי"** (קהלת ז:כג),

The Midrash elaborates,

"עַל כָּל דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה עֲמַדְתִּי, וְעַל פֶּרֶשָׁה זוֹ שֶׁל פָּרָה אֲדַמָּה חֻקְתִּי וְשִׁאֲלִיתִי וּפְשָׁפְשִׁיתִי, וְהָיָה רְחוּקָה מִמֶּנִּי"

(במדבר רבה יט:ג)

Even the wisest of men recognized that there are dimensions of Torah that transcend the grasp of human intellect.

Rashi, quoting Chazal, explains,

"לְפִי שֶׁהִשְׁטִין וְאוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם מוֹנִין אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לומר: מֶה הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת וְמֶה טַעַם יֵשׁ בָּהּ? לְפִיכָךְ כָּתוּב בָּהּ חֻקָּה. גְּזֵרָה הִיא מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, אֵין לָךְ רִשּׁוֹת לְהַרְהֵר אַחֲרֶיהָ"

(רש"י במדבר יט:ב)

At first glance, this sounds as if Judaism discourages inquiry. Nothing could be further from the truth. Torah demands that we learn, question, analyze, and seek understanding. The lesson of Chukat is not that we should stop thinking, but that after we have exhausted the limits of our intellect, we must possess the humility to recognize that the wisdom of Hashem infinitely transcends the wisdom of man.

Perhaps this is the depth of **"נִשְׁעָה וְנִשְׁמָע"**

(שמות כד:יז).

The Gemara teaches, **"בְּשַׁעָה שֶׁהִקְדִּימוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִשְׁעָה, לְנִשְׁמָע, יִצְתָה בֵּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה לָהֶם: מִי גִלָּה לְבִנֵּי יִזְרָח שֶׁמֶלֶךְ הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשְׁתַּמְשֵׁין בּוֹ"**

(שבת פח ע"א)

The greatness of Klal Yisrael was not that they abandoned understanding, but that they understood that commitment to Hashem cannot be contingent upon complete understanding.

Perhaps this is why Parashat Chukat contains so many difficult episodes: the passing of Miriam, the decree preventing Moshe Rabbeinu from entering Eretz Yisrael, and the death of Aharon HaKohen. Chukat teaches us that our relationship with Hashem cannot depend solely on receiving answers. Sometimes the highest expression of emunah is not understanding, but continuing to walk with Hashem when the road ahead remains hidden.

Parashat Chukat leaves us with a profound and perhaps uncomfortable question: Am I serving Hashem, or am I serving a version of Hashem that fits comfortably within the limits of my own limited intellect?

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