

PARASHAT CHUKAT

(REGULATION)

NUMBERS 19:1-22:1

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

Haftorah Reading:

Judges 11:1-33

B'rit Chadashah:

On the red heifer, the sacrificial system and the blood of Yeshua: **Hebrews 9:11-22; 13:10-13**

Yeshua is the spiritual Rock and source of spiritual water: **1 Corinthians 10:4; John 4:10,14; 7:37; Revelation 22:17**

On Yeshua being like the serpent on a pole during his death on the cross: **John 3:9-21; 12:3**

Our victory over Satan, the serpent: **Luke 10:19; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57**

Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

- 19:1 The Red Heifer
- 20:1 Miriam's Death
- 20:3 The People Complain for Lack of Water and Against the Manna
- 20:7 YHVH Commands Moses to Bring Water from the Rock
- 20:9 Moses Sins by Striking the Rock and Is Punished by Not Being Permitted to Lead the Israelites into the Promised Land
- 21:1 Amalek Attacks the Israelites
- 21:4 The Israelites Murmur Again; Complaining About the Manna and Lack of Water
- 21:6 Fiery Serpents Attack the Complainers
- 21:8 Moses Constructs a Serpent on a Pole and the People Are Healed of the Venomous Bites

Study Questions For This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):

1 19:2, *Red heifer*. How does the red heifer point to Yeshua? The Jews are at a loss to explain the significance of this ritual. They call this a *statute (chukim)* or a commandment from YHVH that has no apparent explanation, but which is done simply out of obedience. Some clues to help you link the red heifer to Yeshua might include the following: the color red, the burning of the cow, the cow's spotless purity, she had never born a yoke, and the heifer was slain outside the camp. Additionally, hyssop, cedar wood and scarlet were thrown into the fire. Each was symbolic of something that prophetically points to Yeshua's sin atoning work at the cross.

(For a complete discussion of the red heifer, see our teaching article at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/red-heifer.pdf>.)

- 2** **20:2–3**, *There was no water ... the people chided with Moses.* Do you suffer lack in your life? Scripture says that Yeshua will supply all of our needs (Phil 4:19). Do you get angry with YHVH and murmur against him for your lot in life and for the bad things that happen to you? Or do you give thanks to him for all that happens (1 Thess 5:18) knowing that all things work to good for the benefit of our being conformed into the image of Yeshua (Rom 8:28–29)? We must go through the wilderness of life before entering the Promised Land. Those who murmured did not enter the Promised Land. If we keep fighting or resisting our trials in the wilderness instead of learning from them and overcoming them, then how will we be spiritually prepared and refined to enter the Promised Land? It is about faith in the promises of YHVH. Do we truly believe his Word when he says he will supply all of our needs?
- 3** **20:5**, *It [the wilderness] is not a place of seed and fig and grape and pomegranates; and there is no water to drink.* This was the complaint of the people against YHVH. In Hebraic thought, water, the fig tree, wine from the grape, as well as oil, milk and honey (the two symbols of the Promised Land) are all metaphors for Torah (see *Everyman's Talmud*, pp. 133–134). The Israelites were seeking physical food, but were missing the spiritual food (i.e. Torah, faith in his Word and promises) that YHVH was abundantly providing them during their wilderness walk. Additionally, the Hebrew word for *wilderness* is *b'midbar* (the Hebrew name for the book of Numbers), which means “in the wilderness, desert, uninhabited land or pasture.” The root word of *midbar* is the word *dabar* meaning “to speak, declare, command, promise or commune.” In a number of instances in Scripture, the terms *word/dabar of God/Elohim* or *word/dabar of the LORD/YHVH* is used to denote words coming directly from the mouth of YHVH. In the Tabernacle/*Mishkan*, the Most Set-Apart Place was called the *D'veer* (a cognate of the word *debar*) or *oracle* where Moses went to receive the word of YHVH.

What is the point of this brief word study? While going through the wilderness of life, if we have an attitude of gratitude instead of one of complaining, murmuring, doubt, fear and unbelief in the Word and promises of YHVH, will we be more likely to understand his purposes, instructions, (i.e. Torah), his heart and his plans for our lives? Will we hear his voice more clearly and understand his will for our lives thereby receiving hope for the future and strengthened faith? One can waste one's energy on murmuring and never grow up spiritually, or one can determine to hear YHVH and to commune with him in the wilderness of life and seek spiritual enrichment out of that wilderness and view it as our training ground for entering the Promised Land. Will you make a conscious effort to redirect your thoughts and attitude positively while never forgetting the bitter lessons of our Israelite forefathers: murmuring produced nothing except death in the wilderness?

- 4** **21:5**, *Our soul loathes this light bread.* The rabbis teach that the ability to expound the Torah was granted primarily to those who ate the manna. That is why they were granted the opportunity to delve deeply into the meaning of the words and could draw out the deep meaning of the Words of Elohim (*ArtScroll Davis Edition Baal haTurim Chumash/Bamidbar*, p. 1582). Who is the manna from heaven that has the words of life and truth (John 6:32–51,63)? What did Yeshua say that believers must do with this manna (John 6:53–58)? Those who complain about YHVH's manna cannot properly ingest it or appreciate it, whereas those who have a heart of gratitude and who relish YHVH's Word will derive much benefit therefrom. How much do you love Yeshua—the Living Torah and the Written Torah? Many profess to love Yeshua, the Living Torah, but spend great energy attempting to prove that the Written Torah is no longer for us today. This is impossible to prove, for Scripture clearly teaches that Yeshua was the Word of Elohim made flesh (John 1:1,14). Make no mistake about it: to destroy the Torah-Word of Elohim is to destroy Yeshua! How much spiritual revelation will those people receive who carve up and destroy portions of YHVH's Word (both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Apostolic Scriptures, which are an outgrowth of and founded upon the Hebrew Scriptures or Tanakh) saying it is no longer for us today? What was YHVH's response to those Israelites who murmured against the bread and water he provided for them? Did he not allow snakes (evil spirits; see Luke 10:19) to torment them until they were destroyed or finally repented? Let's demonstrate that we have an attitude of gratitude for *all* of the Father's Word (from Genesis to Revelation) by believing, loving and obeying that Word!

- 5** **21:6**, *YHVH sent fiery serpents*. YHVH judged Israel for murmuring by sending fiery serpents among them. How often do we lash out with our tongues to kill, steal and destroy, to sow discord among brethren (which YHVH hates and calls an abomination in Prov 6:16–19)? The mouths of the unrighteous are an open tomb spewing out death and destruction (Rom 3:13; Prov 18:21). Many times it is the little comments, the innuendos, the sharp vocal tones, the little sarcasms, the cryptic comments, the terse criticisms and complaints in passing that do the most damage to others and grieve the Spirit of Elohim in our lives and in our congregations. Think about this. Pray that your words may speak life, not death, to others. Pray that you would be so full of the love and the Spirit of Yeshua and that no destructive words would ever come from your mouth.
- 6** **21:7**, *We have sinned, for we have spoken against YHVH*. The rabbis teach that Israel was punished with serpents because they acted in the manner of the serpent who spoke slanderously against Elohim when deceiving Adam and Eve. Likewise, the Israelites spoke malicious slander against YHVH when they criticized the manna he had sent them. Both incidents involved food, which is a great area of human weakness and one to which humans are subject to temptation (*ArtScroll Baal haTurim Chumash/Bamidbar*, p. 1608). Can you see the parallels here? Who created Adam and Eve and gave them instructions concerning the Tree of Knowledge? Likewise, who gave them the manna in the wilderness and later identified himself as the spiritual manna in John 6? Satan spoke evil against YHVH-Yeshua (in his pre-incarnate state), and later incited Israel to speak against the manna (a type of Yeshua, the Bread of Life). Satan also tempted Yeshua over the issue of food and manna in Matthew 4. What are the implications here? Discuss physical versus spiritual food, physical and spiritual food that is forbidden of YHVH versus that which is permitted, and how Satan uses the issue of food to try to turn us away from the path of righteousness and obedience to YHVH.
- 7** Rabbi Samson Hirsch in his commentary on the fiery serpents notes that they had been there all along dogging the Israelites, but had been held back by the gracious hand of YHVH such that the Israelites were unaware of the serpents' presence (*The Pentateuch/Numbers*, p. 381). The sin of doubt, unbelief and malicious slander against YHVH and his anointed servant, Moses, caused YHVH to remove his protective hand of grace—as a judgment to bring Israel unto repentance—allowing the serpents, who had been there all along, access to the malcontents. The same situation occurred when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Set-Apart Spirit and they were struck dead (Acts 5). What are the implications here? When we have so grieved the Spirit of YHVH and resisted his entreaties to walk in right relationship and obedience to him so that he can bless us, does he withhold his hand of grace and allow the evil one to attack us to bring us to repentance? Are you repeatedly dogged by (demonic?) attacks in a certain area of your life? Is YHVH calling you to repent? On the other hand, how many would-be attackers are lurking in the shadows of your life waiting for you to sin, or waiting for you to step out from under the blood of Yeshua and to put down the shield of faith by which the fiery darts of the Evil One against you are quenched (Eph 6:16)? How often do you think that the gracious and merciful hand of YHVH protects you from the attacks of the fiery serpents in your life? Probably more than you realize. Give him praise and rejoice!
- 8** **21:8–9** *Moses made a serpent of brass*. The serpent on the bronze pole is another prophetic picture of the redemptive work of Yeshua. What are the parallels? Why is the pole bronze? What is bronze a metaphor for in Scripture? (See Lev 26:19 and Deut. 28:23.) Why is it a snake and how does that picture Yeshua? Why a pole? (See John 3:14 and 12:32.)

Numbers 21—A Mini-Study:

The Process of Overcoming—From Sin to Victory and Salvation!

- ☞ **21:4–9**, The bronze serpent on the pole is a prophetic picture of salvation at the cross of Yeshua from the sting of death brought on by sin (1 Cor 15:55–57). This is a picture of the believer's initial salvation.
- ☞ **21:10–22:1**, Here is a recounting of the Israelites' wilderness trek before entering the Promised Land. It was a time of testing, refining, building of faith, and learning obedience for the Israelites. This is a picture of the spiritual walk of the believer through the wilderness of this physical life.
- ☞ **21:14–35**, While crossing the wilderness, the Israelites had to fight and overcome the enemy—i.e., those

who would keep them from fulfilling their YHVH-ordained destiny to possess the land and inheritance he had promised them. First comes the fighting and overcoming, followed by the victories. The life of the believer is one of spiritual struggle, as well, against the world, the flesh and the devil. (See Rom 7; 2 Cor 10:3–5; Eph 6:10–18.)

- ✎ **21:10,14–18**, We read how Israel was refreshed with water from the rock. Isaiah speaks about wells of salvation (Isa 11:3). There is a springing up of joy and praise (verse 17) that comes as victory is experienced, and as YHVH makes rivers to flow out of seemingly dry and barren situations (verse 18). We, too, are called to come to the rivers of salvation, the river of life and to become ourselves a river of life to all those with whom we come into contact (John 7:37–39). Yeshua is the source of that living water; he is the spiritual Rock and source of water that never runs dry (John 4:10,13–14; 1 Cor 10:4).

Numbers 19:1-11

THE RED HEIFER (PARAH ADUMMAH)

Ya'acov Natan Lawrence

Hoshana Rabbah Messianic Discipleship Resources

The Jewish sages say that the commandment (*mitzvah*) of the red cow is “beyond human understanding.” Like the *afkoman* (the middle broken matzah that is “buried” and “resurrected”—a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Yeshua) in the *Pesach* (Passover) Seder, the meaning of which to this day remains unclear to the Jewish rabbis, the red cow is a ritual that makes sense *only* when Yeshua the Messiah is added to the picture.

(For a complete discussion of the red heifer, see our teaching article at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/red-heifer.pdf>.)

Numbers 21:4-9

THE FIERY SERPENTS

Ya'acov Natan Lawrence

Hoshana Rabbah Messianic Discipleship Resources

The fiery serpents were a righteous judgment Elohim brought upon Israel for murmuring and unbelief. Israel had “sharpened their tongues like a serpent” (Ps 140:3) and “their throat [was] an open sepulcher; with their tongues have ... used deceit; the poison of asps [was] under their lips” (Rom 3:13). All this acrimony was directed at YHVH and Moses, and the Israelites reaped what they had sown. Elohim loosed fiery serpents upon them to bite and sting to death the unbelieving murmurers.

The wilderness Elohim led the Israelites through was full of fiery serpents and scorpions (Deut 8:15), yet this is the only account in the Torah of these creatures ever attacking Israel. YHVH had protected them to this point and just this once he pulled back his hand of providential protection and grace allowing them to experience the due recompense of their sinful actions. How often has our merciful Father withheld the just desserts of our faithless, rebellious and abominable action against him and graciously protected us from the full consequences of our sin? If we fail to hear his soft voice of correction he will be forced to deal more harshly with us until our attention is gained (Ps 32:8–9). All he has to do is withdraw his hand of protection that restrains the judgments we all deserve and the “fiery serpents” will likewise attack us. Ananias and Sapphira are examples of this. Job experienced some of this, as well.

(For a complete discussion of the fiery serpents, see our teaching article at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/fieryserpents.pdf>.)

HAFTORAH READING—JUDGES 11:1–33

Jephthah: A Man of Valor From the Other Side of the Tracks

1 **11:1–2**, *Was the son of a harlot.* YHVH can raise up anyone to accomplish his purposes—even men of low degree. YHVH does not judge a man by his outward appearances, but by the condition of his heart (1 Sam 16:7). In YHVH's eyes, what was Jephthah? (See verse 1.) Are there specters from your past that still haunt you and hold you back, or have you overcome them by the blood of the Lamb and assumed your new identity as more than a conqueror who is seated in heavenly places with Yeshua? (Read Phil 4:13; Rom 8:37; Rev 12:11; Col 2:12; Eph 2:6; for your inspiration and edification; also read Zec 4:6 and 1 Cor 1:27.) YHVH can take any vessel, no matter how average it may be, and elevate it for his purposes providing the vessel has faith and willingness to be used. In this way, YHVH and not man gets the glory. Will you be such a vessel in YHVH's hands?

2 **11:12**, *Jephthah sent messengers unto the king.* Before going to war with the people of Ammon, Jephthah made every effort to diplomatically resolve Israel's differences with that hostile nation. Armed conflict was still the result, and YHVH gave Israel the victory.

What can we learn from this? Yeshua instructs us to make every attempt to create peace with our enemies before resorting to legal (or in Jephthah's case, lethal) means (Matt 5:25–26). When all else fails, if one is walking in the paths of righteousness, know that YHVH will back you when, as a last resort, you come to blows with your enemies.

In Scripture, there exists no prohibition against self defense. Some will use Yeshua's admonition to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39) as justification *not* to defend oneself against an aggressor, and that somehow doing so will be a witness to one's enemy of the love of Yeshua. Not defending oneself may accomplish this noble goal, but more likely the aggressor will view it as a sign of weakness to justify increased aggression against you.

When Yeshua said to turn the other cheek what did he really mean? Was Yeshua justifying pacifism in place of self defense? According to Hebrew scholars, David Biven and Roy Blizzard, pacifism has never been part of Hebrew thought or culture. It is permissible to kill in order to defend oneself. The authors point out that some of Yeshua's disciples were armed (Luke 22:38,50), and that once Yeshua even suggested that his disciples purchase swords (Luke 22:35–37). When instructing his disciples to turn the other cheek, Yeshua was not talking about how to deal with violent aggressors such as rapists, robbers, or murderers, or when facing an enemy in battle. Rather he was talking about the fundamentals of brotherly relationship—how to relate to our neighbors. In other words, if a friend embarrasses us by slapping us in the face, we are not to slap him back, but instead to offer him the other cheek. This has nothing to do with a battlefield situation or when dealing with a violent aggressor. (*Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, pp. 68–71). In modern words, with a brother, we need to let it just roll off our back.

3 **11:29**, *Then the Spirit of YHVH came upon Jephthah.* There are those who claim that the power and gifts of YHVH's Spirit were unknown in biblical times prior to the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. This is not altogether true when one considers this passage concerning Jephthah. What are some other examples of YHVH's Spirit coming upon Israelites in the prior to the Day of Pentecost? (See Num 11:26–27; 24:2; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:11; 11:6; 19:20–24; 1 Chron 12:18; 2 Chron 24:20.)

4 **11:30**, *Jephthah vowed a vow.* Rash words (or vows) spoken may come back to haunt a person. Be careful with the mouth. Proverbs 10:19 says, “In the multitude of words there lacks not sin, but he that refrains his lips is wise.” Not only that, was Jephthah attempting to negotiate with YHVH? If so, was this a wise move? Does YHVH really need or want anything that we could possibly give him in order to curry his favor? There is only one thing that he wants from us. What is that? (Read Hos 6:6; 1 Sam 15:22; Mic 6:8; Isa 66:2.) The heart of man is always the issue with YHVH! (See 1 Sam 16:7; 1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22.)

