

Points to Ponder  
Chukas 5776

**Zos Chukas Hatorah (19:2)** – The Ramban asks why the Parsha begins with Zos Chukas HaTorah and then Daber El Bnei Yisrael. Shouldn't it be Daber El Bnei Yisrael first and then Zos Chukas HaTorah? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained in the name of Rav Yerucham Gorelick ztl. that the first rule is that the Parah Aduma is something that requires the Beis Din of 71 – that it should be first a Chukah that it must be LEinei HaEida and then Daber El Bnei Yisrael that this is part of the chukas HaTorah.

**This is the Torah when a man dies in the tent (19:14)** – **The Rambam** (Talmud Torah 3:12) writes that the words of Torah stand the test of time when one is prepared to kill himself for them in the tents of the Tzaddikim. What does being among the Tzaddikim have to do with it? **Rav Nossan Tzvi Finkel ztl.** explained that the source for the Rambam is the understanding that Chazal had that one should not absolve himself from the Beis HaMedrash – which is distinct from not absolving himself from Torah. Torah is often studied in many places but the situation that guarantees its success is in the Battei Medrashos.

**Since you didn't trust me to sanctify me (20:12)** – The commentaries abound as to what exactly the sin of Moshe and Aharon was. **Rav Yosef Albo** says the sin was in the fact that they had a chance to make a Kiddush Hashem and they did not. He should have declared the waters to spring forth and he did not – losing out on a chance to prove that Tzaddik Gozer V'HaKadosh Baruch Hu Mikayem. The **Meshech Chochma** explains that other Neviim used the Tactic but not Moshe. Why not? **Rav Schlessinger Shlita** explains that Moshe's level was such that if he declared it and Hashem responded – he was afraid that the people would make him into a God. The only time he used this principle was in defense of his brother's honor in Parshas Korach. The problem was, when people saw him do this for Aharon, and not for Hashem's honor it was wrong and for that he was punished.

**And the entire nation cried for Aharon for 30 days (20:29)** – The Midrash notes Aharon's unique ability to approach and mediate between aggrieved parties. Why did it keep working? Why were people not wise to Aharon's ruse? **Rav Baruch Mordechai Eizrachi Shlita** explained that Aharon was not a tactical operative – he was a perceptive individual who understood people well. He knew that no one liked arguments. He knew that each person felt that if only the other side knew how he was eating himself up over the disagreement then they would move to resolution. He then went and made each one look inside and see things from that other awareness perspective that came from the understanding of human relationships. Thus, the nation didn't "fall for it" they wanted it.

**And our souls are sick of this unpleasant bead (21:5)** – It seems strange that the people who are recognized as the most spiritually advanced generation get so stuck on the physical? Moreover, each time that they did, it caused them further harm so why didn't they learn a lesson from the experience? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** learns that the people suffered and focused on the physical because they sought spiritual. When they feared that the spiritual attachment was not with them, they hung from the awareness that their lives were empty and sought to cling to something more tangible. Thus they focused on food and on their emptiness instead of the real reason for their depressed state – loss of reality of Hashem's presence.

**Moshe made a copper snake and placed it on a pole (21:9)** – The Mishna in Rosh Hashana asks 2 compelling questions – one concerning Moshe's hands in the battle of Amalek and one in regard to the snake here – "Does the snake kill and bring back to life?" **Rav Chaim Sabato Shlita** explains that the

Mishna is teaching us not to simply look to the rationalist view of the situation – that snakes kill – because snakes can also heal. The deeper message is that Hashem decides how that which can be lethal can also be life promoting. A similar concept exists within the Ketores of last week's Parsha. Sometimes in our quest to make things make sense, we write Hashem out of the equation. We need to think beyond that which is in our current sphere of logic in order to appreciate the Niflaos HaBorai.

**Az Yashir Yisrael (21:17) – Ohr Hachaim HaKadosh** asks why Bnei Yisrael sang the Shirah now and if it refers to Torah? But more importantly, he asks why there was no Shirah at the time of Matan Torah? **Rav Gifter ztl.** explains that the true Kabbolos HaTorah didn't happen at Har Sinai, it happened when Moshe finally brought the Luchos down. And since they sinned in the interim, they didn't see themselves as worthy of singing the Shira.

**Haftarah: Yiftach ran away from his brothers and he settled in Eretz Tov (Shoftim 11:3)** – Some of the Meforshim explain that the land that Yiftach ran to was qualitatively good. Others point out that the land was owned by a man named Tov. **Rav Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer Shlita** quoted the Yirushalmi that pointed out that the land was exempt from Terumos and Maaseros and Shmitta since it was still in the hands of the non-Jews. Thus, the Reikim – the empty people who would gladly trade in the Mitzva, would refer to it as Tov. Rabbi Bechoffer added that here we find the first leader of the Baal Teshuva movement as he trained the people around him to bend their concept of what is indeed Tov toward that which Hashem would find to be Tov. One needs to be careful with such a movement as was seen in the Yiftach episodes....