

Points to Ponder  
Chukas 5777

**Zos Chukas Hatorah (19:2)** – Shlomo Hamelech came to this section of the Torah and realized that despite all of the knowledge of the world that he had, he could not explain this message – it was distant from him. How was something that would make the Tamai Tahor also able to make the Tahor Tamai? Why is it that we demonstrate Kavod HaBriyos to someone by interrupting Shema for him and not Shemoneh Esrai (See Yoma 19b)? How is it in the same Beracha we speak of Hashem in the second person (Ata) and then switch to the third (“Asher” “HaMotzee”) person which introduces a level of distance in the relationship? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would remind us often that if in the world of quantum physics a particle can indeed in two places at once and can travel in an infinite number of directions at once. It is absolutely impossible to explain quantum phenomena using traditional principles of physics. If in the natural world there seem to be glaring contradictions, we ought not to be surprised if in halacha as well there will be contradictions. Religion will not resolve any contradictions at all! If anything it will make us aware of more contradictions. All of the Torah is one big chukah; the entire creation is one vast chukah. The midrashim on the opening possuk in Breishis make the comment that Hashem looked into the Torah and used it as a blueprint for creation. All of nature is interconnected with Torah. But just as the study of physics guides us to maneuver with all the contradictions in the natural realm, so too the halachah guides us in how we should deal with contradictions in the spiritual realm.

**This is the Torah when a person dies in the tent (19:14)** – The Gemara (Shabbos 83b) quotes Rav Yonasan who notes that one should not absent himself from Torah study even in his final hours based on this possuk. Why is that the time to be in the Beis Hamedrash? **Rav Kook ztl.** explained that lest a person think of Torah as merely a moral code applicable only when one is alive, study on one’s deathbed teaches that Torah’s messages are applicable even in the great beyond. By using the metaphor of the “Tent of Torah” Rabbi Yonasan highlighted the tent that was a fellowship of Torah scholars, the mind-sharpening milieu of the Beit Midrash. Not only to cultivate friendship and camaraderie, rather collective study sanctifies time and elevates life.

**And he shall take an Aizov and a Tahor Person shall dip it into the water (19:18)**- Who is this Ish Tahor? Targum Yonasan explains that it must be a Kohein. However, the Talmud (Yoma 43a) notes that the sprinkling can be done by any male – Kohein or not – and Tosafos notes that this is because sprinkling is no considered an Avodah. So why did Targum Yonasan assume it must be done by a Kohein ? **Rav Gamliel Rabinovitz Shlita** explained that perhaps Targum Yonasan is merely teaching us how it was most likely done. He adds that alternatively it is possible that for the first Parah Adumah it had to be the Kohein specifically. We do find many differences between that first Parah and others performed later (See Meseches Parah chapter 9).

**And speak to the stone (20:7)** – We know that Moshe was punished because he was told to speak to the stone and he hit the stone. **Rashi** explains that the hitting of the stone denied the opportunity of the people to learn that they can be moved by the words if a stone could. **Or HaChaim HaKadosh** argues that it was the fact that he called them HaMorim – the rebellious ones. The **Bas Ayin** explains that both commentaries work together. Moshe first referred to the people as Morim and then realized that as a result of his sin with his mouth he could not use it effectively in solving their problem. The Bas Ayin adds that this was his error – he did not focus on the fact that after sin and Teshuva, he was going to be able to perform once again. **Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** added in the name of the **Chofetz Chaim** that

when one goes to a doctor, the doctor often says, "Stick out your tongue," so the doctor can see the source of one's illness. The same mouth that sins can be the source of Teshuvah and Yeshuah. The nation saw that Aharon expired (20:29) - x

**The whole congregation saw that Aaron had expired (20:29) - Rashi** explains that when Bnei Yisrael saw Moshe and Elazar coming down without Aharon, they could not believe that it was possible that the one who stood up against the angel and stopped the plague can be overpowered by death, Thereupon the Malachim showed Aharon to them, lying in the bed. When they they saw [him] then they believed. **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** related that when his grandfather, Rav Chaim passed away, his father, Rav Moshe needed to confirm the news by travelling to Warsaw to confirm in person. When asked why, he explained that when a Rebbe is taken from his students, the students cannot conceive of life continuing without him so they desperately search for him, despite the evidence of his passing. Rav Soloveitchik noted that the same held true here: Despite the testimony of Aaron's death, the people could not accept the bitter reality until they saw it with their own eyes.

**And our souls are sick with this bread that disregulates digestion (21:5)** – The Talmud (Avodah Zara 5a) relates that when they declared this declaration, Moshe called them Kefuyei Tova Bnei Kefuyei Tova, children of Adam HaRishon who was Kafui Tov. **Rav Nachum Parsovitz ztl.** asked why Moshe mentioned Adam HaRishon in this context? He answered that Moshe was providing an explanation for the people's behavior. By mentioning Adam, he was noting a phenomenon about mankind in general – that they do not regularly have Hakaras HaTov.

**"...the well where the Lord said to Moses, 'Assemble the people that I may give them water.' Then Israel sang this song: Spring up, O well – sing to it – The well which the chieftains dug, Which the nobles of the people started With the sceptre, and with their own staffs. And from the wilderness to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth..." (Numbers 21:16-19)** - This section, known as the Shiras HaBe'er, is leined melodically. **Rav Tzvi Weinrib Shlita** noted that this Shirah is different than the Shiras HaYam as it comes in the time of transition from Moshe, Aharon and Miriam's leadership to a different form. Instead of being led in shirah, they sang together. Thus, the people find their voice, and it is the voice of song. Yalkut Shimoni (Chukas, 764) sees this as a culmination of a process of maturation. We need to know that when prominent leaders are not apparent, we all must assume leadership responsibilities. We must, each of us, find our own voices and sing the songs of leadership.

**Haftorah: Yiftach ran away because of his brothers and settled in the land of Tov (Shoftim 11:3)** – Why did Yiftach run away to this place? The **Chida** explained that Yiftach ran this far in order to be outside of the land of Israel so that he should not bump into his brothers while being Oleh Regel which could touch off Machlokes. The **Be'er Moshe of Ozrov** added that this is why the land was called Tov (and not Tova) in that it was the opposite of the second day of creation where the word Tov was not used since it involved a split. **Rav Yehonasan Eybeshutz** explained that he ran away since his brothers kicked him out and he therefore did not know which gate to go into the Beis HaMikdash thru – for each Shevet had a specific gate and what was he to do during Aliyah l'Regel.