

זאת חוקת התורה This is the Chok of the Torah (19:1) – The Meforshim ask that the wording should be this is the Chok of the Parah. What does it mean to be Chukas Hatorah? **Rav Gedaliah Schorr ztl.** explains that within every Mitzva there is an outstanding characteristic that is apparent albeit in smaller scale in other Mitzvos. Here, the idea of Chok is quite outstanding – there is no apparent reason for this Mitzva. Although the reasons for other Mitzvos are provided, one needs to know that there are aspects even by those other Mitzvos that will not be well understood by the human intellect.

זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באוהל This is the Torah when a person dies in a tent (19:14) – The Gemara (Berachos 63a) notes that Divrei Torah can only survive among those who are willing to die over them. How can Divrei Torah survive on something that is dead? **Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** explained that the reference here is to those who are involved in Chinuch and think that as a result of their stopping their own spiritual growth in order to educate others that they are spiritually dying. This is not so. Torah is best when it is within its Achsania and the Michanchim are the best examples.

While on the subject, I'd like to add that Torah is often compared to water. When water flows it is powerful and can break down mountains and shatter obstructions. However, when it freezes it cannot do anything. The same can be said for Torah life – when it is alive, it can overcome all obstacles but when it is left alone on the shelves, it is limited.

ויך את הסלע The hitting of the rock (20:11) – Why did Moshe deserve such an intense punishment here? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl.** suggests that this was necessary since Moshe digressed from the literal instruction of Hashem here. He put the entire belief system of Moshe Emes and Toraso Emes in peril. Therefore Hashem had to be strict with him.

ויראו כל העדה כי גוע אהרן The people saw that Aharon had died (20:29) – **Rashi** cites the Midrash Rabbah which explains that the people did not believe Moshe that Aharon had died until after Moshe davened to Hashem to ask Him to show mercy and the Malachim showed Aharon having passed. When they saw, they believed. The Midrash suggests that the people were ready to stone Moshe over Aharon's death. Did they really think Moshe killed him? Did they really think Aharon was going to live forever? **Rav Menachem Genack Shlita** suggested that the people knew that Aharon had passed but that they could not believe it. They did not know how they were going to go on. For that, one needs to constantly seek out his master – to know in their souls that they would need to take over.

והיה כל הנשך וראה אותו וחי And it was whomever was bitten (21:8) – Usually when we find the word “Vhaya” utilized it is an expression of joy. Where is the joy in being bitten by a snake? And why was it so bad that they complained about the Manna anyway? **Rav Goldvicht ztl.** explained that their sin was that they could not accept their reliance on Hashem. They did not want their dependence to be blatantly obvious. However, there is error in that. Realizing that when you rely on Hashem your needs are taken care of, allows your relationship with Hashem to grow. This is the reason for the great satisfaction in having an ongoing relationship with Hashem. The **Kotzker** commented that this was the curse of the Nachash – it was as if Hashem said “Here is your food, don't bother me anymore”.

על כן יאמר בספר מלחמות ה' את והב בסופה Therefore it will be written in the Sefer Milchamos Hashem (21:14) – **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that there is a need for debate and occasional sharpness when people are learning. To grow in learning one needs to have a bit of Chutzpah – a Sefer Milchamos – a battle sefer. However, if one does not learn when to battle and when not to, it could be problematic.

The Torah's style in the Sefer Milchamos Hashem was "Vaheiv B'Sufo" to get to a point of being loving to one another at the end.

הזאת אז ישיר ישראל את השירה הזאת Then the Jews sang the Shirah (21:17) – As opposed to the last Shirah, this time Moshe is not singled out. Why? **Rav Frand Shlita** suggested that while the people finally realized (AZ Yashir) that the Be'er was a merit because of Miriam, Moshe had known it all along. It would have been improper to assume that it was AZ Yashir Moshe, for he had been singing all along. **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl.** suggested that when the people left Mitzrayim they did not know the intricacies of singing Shirah. Moshe had to teach them and thus, he was singled out. However, after 40 years in the desert, they DID know how to sing and therefore Moshe did not need to lead them in Shirah.

Haftorah: ואתם שנאתם אותי ותשלחני מבית אבי: Yiftach said to the elders of Gilad "You hate me and have sent me away from my father's house and now you come to me when it is hard for you?" (Shoftim 11:7) – It wasn't the Zekanim who sent him away – it was the brothers. Why did he blame the Zekanim? **The Dubno Maggid** explains that when someone has the chance to stand up for what's right and punts on that chance, the Avaira is attributed to him. Yiftach was making this clear to the people – you could have stood up for me but you didn't. The Avaira is yours!