

QUESTIONS ON PARSHAT CHUKAT

Q-1. (a) Why do the *para aduma* laws follow the gifts to *kohanim* at the end of *Korach*? (b) What makes *para aduma* a *chok* (decree beyond human understanding) (2 views)? (c) (1) How did the *para* atone for the *cheit ha'eigel*? (2) In what 6 ways did the *para aduma* process atone for the *cheit ha'eigel*? (d) (1) Who could slaughter the *para aduma* (2 views)? (2) Why did *Aharon* not slaughter it? (e) (1) Why is "ole" (yoke) without a *vav*? (2) Which items could be placed on the *para aduma*? (f) How many *para adumas* have been burnt since *matan Torah*? (*Bamidbar* 19:2-3)

A-1. (a) It teaches that like the *kohanim* were responsible for obtaining *Bnei Yisrael's* atonement for sins, the *kohanim* obtained their purification (*Ramban*). (b) (1) The *para's* ashes made *tahor* one who was *tamei* but *tamei* one who was *tahor* (*Bamidbar Raba*). (2) Something becoming ashes no longer transmits *tuma*, but the *para aduma's* ashes transmitted *tuma* (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 397). (c) (1) After *matan Torah*, *Hashem* raised *Bnei Yisrael* above the *Malach haMavet's* (Angel of Death's) power – since one could not die, a Jewish corpse's *tuma* did not apply. After the *cheit ha'eigel*, death and its *tuma* returned – *Hashem* designated the *para aduma* to represent the *eigel's* mother, which "cleaned up" the *tuma* caused by her "child," the *eigel* (*Tiferet Zion*). (2) (i) The *para* had to be red, signifying sin (*Yeshayahu* 1:18) – the *para* cleansed the *eigel's* sin; (ii) the *para* had to be *temima* (perfect), since *Bnei Yisrael* were in a state of perfection before the *cheit ha'eigel* – a "perfect" cow helped return them to this state; (iii) since *Bnei Yisrael* had thrown off *Hashem's* yoke by worshipping the *eigel*, the *para* could not have a yoke on it; (iv) the 3 items mixed with the *para's* ashes – cedar wood, hyssop and crimson wool – alluded to the 3,000 people who died on account of the *eigel*; (v) just as the *cheit ha'eigel's* punishment would be transmitted in all generations' sins forever, the *para aduma* was a *chukat olam* (an eternal decree); (vi) just as *Moshe* purified *Bnei Yisrael* with the *eigel's* ashes, the *para aduma's* ashes removed *Bnei Yisrael's* *tuma* (*Rabeinu Bechaya*). (d) (1) All agree that *Elazar*, the Deputy *Kohen Gadol*, slaughtered the 1st *para aduma* – subsequent *para adumas* (i) had to be slaughtered by the *Kohen Gadol* (*Rebi Eliezer*). (ii) could be slaughtered by any *kohen* (*Rebi Yehuda*) (*Para* 4:1). (2) Since he was involved in the *cheit ha'eigel* (*Ramban*). (e) (1) To teach that nothing, no matter how small and inconsequential, could be placed on it (*Medrash Lekach Tov*). (2) Items for the *para's* comfort, like a blanket (*Para* 2:3). (f) 9 – the 10th, says the *Rambam*, will be in *yemot haMashiach* (*Para* 3:5).

Q-2. (a) (1) How long was the period between burning the *para aduma* (*Bamidbar* 19) and *Miriam's* death in the next verse? (2) How does this date relate to the *meraglim's* sin? (3) Why does *Miriam's* death follow the *para aduma* laws? (b) (1) What heavenly gift did *Bnei Yisrael* get in the *midbar* in the merit of (i) *Moshe*? (ii) *Aharon*? (iii) *Miriam*? (2) Why was each associated with that gift? (*Bamidbar* 20:1)

A-2. (a) (1) 38 years, 8 days – *Moshe* received the *para aduma mitzvah* on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* of *Bnei Yisrael's* 2nd year in the *midbar* (*Gittin* 60b) – *Elazar* burned a *para* the next day, 2 *Nisan* – *Miriam* died on 10 *Nisan* of the 40th year (*Seder Olam*). (2) All who were punished with death in the *midbar* due to the *meraglim's* sin already had died – the remaining *edah* (assembly) was set to live; (3) to teach that like *korbanot* atoned for sins, so did a *tzadik's* death (*Rashi*). (b) (1) (i) The *mun*; (ii) Clouds of Glory; (iii) the well; (2) (i) *Moshe* personified *Torah* – the daily *mun* freed *Bnei Yisrael* to study *Torah*; (ii) *Aharon* personified *avoda* that brings *Bnei Yisrael* close to the *Shechina*, signified by the Clouds of Glory; (iii) *Miriam* personified *gemilut chesed* by devoting herself to *Bnei Yisrael's* welfare – *Hashem* provided water in her merit (*Ta'anit* 9a).

Q-3. (a) Due to which sin did *Hashem* bar *Moshe* and *Aharon* from entering *Eretz Yisrael* (10 views)? (b) How was this penalty a benefit to *Moshe* and *Aharon*? (c) Why, in *Tefilat Geshem* (Prayer for Rain), do we say, "in the merit of [*Moshe's*] righteousness, grant abundant water", since *Moshe* sinned and was punished for striking the rock to get water – it was no merit to *Moshe*? (*Bamidbar* 20:12)

A-3. (a) (1) *Moshe* struck but not did speak to the rock (*Rashi*). (2) *Moshe* said, "shall we bring water from the rock?" not "shall *Hashem* bring water?" (*Rabeinu Chananel*). (3) *Moshe* was angry, saying, "listen now, rebels" (*Ramban*). (4) *Hashem* said, "gather the *edah*," – *Bnei Yisrael's* pure, prominent members – *Moshe* and *Aharon* "gathered the *kahal*," – every adult and child (*Ba'al haTurim*). (5) In an emergency, *Moshe* and *Aharon* should not have delayed bringing forth water by asking *Hashem* (*Sefer ha-Ikarim*). (6) *Moshe* failed to sanctify *Hashem* by drawing water from each rock to which *Bnei Yisrael* pointed; (7) *Hashem* told *Moshe* and *Aharon* to speak (*ve-dibartem*) to the rock – he wanted them to study *Torah* near it ("*ve-dibarta*" means *talmud Torah* – *Devarim* 6:7) – they did not; (8) *Moshe* struck it twice – striking it once would have been no sin; (9) *Moshe* and *Aharon* did not celebrate the water with song; (10) they did no serious sin here, but since *Aharon* sinned in the *cheit ha'eigel* and *Moshe* erred in sending the *meraglim*, *Hashem* used these failures as pretexts for their dying in the *midbar* (*Abarbanel*). (b) It was not yet their time to die – they entered *olam haba* sooner (*Yoma* 87a). (c) *Moshe* righteously defended *Bnei Yisrael* by hitting the rock – had the rock obeyed when he spoke to it, but *Bnei Yisrael* did not when he spoke to them, they would look worse than a rock (*Bamidbar Raba*).

Q-4. (a) When *Moshe's* messengers told *Edom's* king that *Hashem's* "malach" took *Bnei Yisrael* from *Mitzrayim*, who was this *malach* (2 views)? (b) All mountains were leveled by the Clouds of Glory (*Rashi* – *Bamidbar* 10:34) to ease *Bnei Yisrael's* travels, except which 3? (c) (1) Why did *Moshe* remove the *bigdei kehuna* before *Aharon's* death? (2) Did *Moshe* remove all of *Aharon's* clothes (2 views)? (*Bamidbar* 20:22-28)

A-4. (a) (1) *Moshe* (*Rashi*). (2) An actual angel (*ibn Ezra*). (b) (1) *Sinai* – *matan Torah*; (2) *Hor haHor* – *Aharon's* burial; (3) *Nebo* – *Moshe's* burial (*Rashi*). (c) (1) A *tzadik's* death atones for *Bnei Yisrael's* sins, like wearing the *bigdei kehuna* (*Mo'ed Katan* 28a). (2) (i) He removed all 8 garments – a corresponding heavenly garment appeared under each that he had removed – *Aharon* ended up wearing 8 celestial *bigadim* (*Sifri*). (ii) He removed only the 4 *bigdei Kohen Gadol* and dressed *Elazar* in them, leaving *Aharon* wearing the 4 regular *kohen's* garments (*Sforno*).

Q-5. (a) Why did the *Cana'ni Melech Arad* attack *Bnei Yisrael*? (b) (1) Why did *Bnei Yisrael* call the *mun*, "*lechem ha-kulkeil*" (insubstantial food)? (2) After they complained about the *mun*, why did *Hashem* send snakes to bite them (2 views)? (c) (1) Why did *Bnei Yisrael* sing the "Song of the Well" after *Miriam's* well no longer functioned, instead of 40 years earlier when they started using it? (2) What miracle, which the *Torah* does not record elsewhere, is mentioned in this song? (*Bamidbar* 21:1,5-6,15,17)

A-5. (a) When *Aharon* died, the Clouds of Glory disappeared, leaving *Bnei Yisrael* unprotected (*Rashi*). (b) (1) They thought it was suited for the *midbar's* spiritual life but could not sustain them for arduous agricultural work (*Abarbanel*). (2) (i) The snake first spoke *lashon hara* against *Hashem* about the *Eitz haDa'at's* food (*Bereishit* 3:5) – snakes bit those speaking against *Hashem's* food, the *mun* (*Ba'al haTurim*). (ii) *Hashem* wanted them cured miraculously – they would realize that He cures people – it does not happen "naturally" unless He wishes it (*Bechor Shor*). (c) (1) One says *Birchat haGomeil* after he has left a desert safely (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 219:1) – when *Bnei Yisrael* were at *Eretz Yisrael's* border, safe from dying of thirst in the *midbar*, they praised *Hashem* with this song (*Ateret Zekenim*). (2) When *Bnei Yisrael* prepared to pass through *Nachal Arnon*, the *Emori* hid in the mountainsides' caves above, to cast down arrows and boulders. The *aron* entered the canyon ahead of *Bnei Yisrael*, and the two mountains bonded, crushed the *Emori* and resulted in a river of blood in the canyon (*Berachot* 56a-b).

Q-6. (a) Why does the *Torah* here say, “*Yisrael* sent emissaries to *Sichon*”, while *Devarim* 2:26 says “*I (Moshe)* sent emissaries”? (b) Why did *Sichon* not let *Bnei Yisrael* to cross his land? (c) How was “*Amon*’s border strong”? (d) Why does “*asher*” (which – 21:30) have a dot over the *reish* (2 views)? (e) Why is “*va-yirash*” ([*Moshe*] took possession), spelled with a *yud*, but pronounced “*va-yoresh*” (drove out) with a *vav*? (f) Since *Hashem* told *Moshe* that he would defeat *Og*’s army, why did he fear *Og* (2 views)? (*Bamidbar* 21:21-34)

A-6. (a) It teaches that *Moshe* and *Yisrael* are equal – they cannot be separated – similarly, 20:14 says, “*Moshe* sent emissaries” to *Edom*, but *Shoftim* 11:17 says, “*Yisrael* sent emissaries”; (b) the *Cana’ani* kings paid him to guard their lands; (c) its strength was *Moshe*’s ban on attacking it (*Rashi*). (d) It shows that the (1) word should be interpreted with no “*reish*”, as “*eish*” (fire) – *Nofach* was destroyed by fire; (2) the *Emori* no longer were the “*reish*” (chief) nation; (e) *Moshe* intended sending spies to determine how to drive out the *Emori* from *Yazer* – when the *Emori* heard *Bnei Yisrael* coming, they fled – *Moshe* needed only take possession of *Yazer* (*Ba’al haTurim*). (f) *Moshe* feared that *Og*’s 2 merits would prevent him from defeating *Og*, who (1) did a *mitzvah* by informing *Avram* that his nephew *Lot* had been taken captive, and (2) was circumcised by *Avraham* (*Nida* 61a) – *Hashem* assured *Moshe* that He had subdued *Og*’s guardian angel, and these merits would not protect *Og* (*Zohar*).

Q-7. In the *haftara*, why did *Amon*’s king expect *Yiftach* to give him the land *Moshe* had captured from the *Emori* king, *Sichon*? (*Shoftim* 11:22)

A-7. *Hashem* banned *Moshe*’s conquering *Amon*’s and *Moav*’s lands, but the *Emori* under *Sichon* conquered *Amon*’s and *Moav*’s lands – since *Sichon*’s conquest “purified” the lands from *Bnei Yisrael*’s ban to conquer them, *Moshe* was allowed to capture them. *Yiftach* rejected *Amon*’s claim, since *Moshe* captured these lands from the *Emori*, not from *Amon* (*Gittin* 38a).