



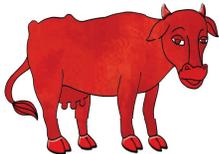
South Head Youth Parasha Sheet

PARASHAT CHUKAT



There are many Mitzvot in the Torah, 613 in total. Each Mitzvah falls into one of three categories; Chukim, Mishpatim and Eidot. Chukim are laws which transcend our understanding. We do not understand these laws. Yet, we perform them because we love Hashem and want to fulfill His word. Laws that fall into this category include the Mitzvot of Mikvah, Kashrut and the Red Heifer (the Parah Adumah). Eidot, translated as 'testimonies' are the laws which relate to Shabbat and the Jewish festivals. Although we enjoy keeping these laws, if Hashem did not command us to keep these laws, man would not have invented these laws on his own. The third category of Mitzvot, Mishpatim, translated as 'laws' are civil laws. We require these laws in order for society to live in peace and harmony with one another. If Hashem did not command us to keep these laws, man would have invented them as these are necessary basic laws required by society. These include the laws of 'don't kill' and 'don't steal'.

Our Parasha this week speaks about the Mitzvah of the Red Heifer. We don't understand the reason for it, yet, we happily perform this Mitzvah in order to strengthen our connection with Hashem. The law of the Red Heifer only applied in the times of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash, and will once again apply with the coming of Moshiach. These laws are relevant for purifying an impure person. When a Jewish person became impure from either being in contact with a dead body, speaking Lashon Hara or for another reason, he could only be purified if he was sprinkled with the ashes of the Red Heifer. There were specific requirements for the Red Heifer. It had to be a completely red cow without any blemishes. The cow had to be completely healthy and was not allowed to have more than one black or white hair growing on its entire body. From the time it was born, the red cow may not have worked carrying people or goods. As part of the purification process, a Kohen would slaughter the cow and burn its meat. While the meat was burning, the Kohen would add a cedar stick and hyssop tied with a red thread into the fire. The Kohen would then take the ashes and mix it with spring water. This special mixture of ashes and water was then used by the Kohen to sprinkle impure Jews in order to purify them. In order to become pure, the impure person was required to wait outside the camp of the Jewish people for seven days. On the third and seventh days the Kohen sprinkled the mixture of the ashes and water on the impure person. Then, on the seventh day the person was required to immerse in the Mikvah. Following this, the person was purified. There was one catch with the Mitzvah of the Red Heifer: in the process of purifying the impure person, the Kohen would then become impure. This means that while the Red Heifer purified the impure, it made the pure impure! Because of this, there was always at least one person in the Jewish camp who was impure. Altogether, there have only ever been nine Red Heifers in Jewish history. There will be a tenth Red Heifer when Moshiach comes.

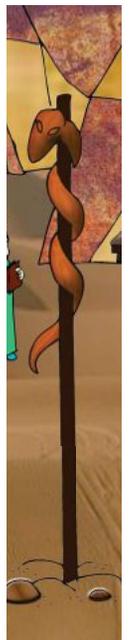


The Parasha also speaks of a wonderful miracle that occurred to the Jewish people in the desert. The desert was very hot and rain did not fall throughout the entire forty years that the Jewish people were in the desert. The water that the Jewish people drank came from a very special well, called 'the well of Miriam'. This well traveled together with the Jewish people in the desert. The well, which produced very sweet and clear water was hidden by a rock. On the day that Miriam passed away, the well suddenly disappeared. The rock that had covered the well now looked identical to all the other rocks in the desert. The Jewish people became very worried. Fearing that they would die of thirst, they immediately complained to Moshe. Moshe turned to Hashem for assistance. Hashem told Moshe to take his stick and gather the Jewish people. He then commanded Moshe to speak to the rock in front of all the people and command it to give forth water. The reason why Hashem told Moshe to speak to the rock in front of all the people is because He wanted the Jewish people to see that a rock will obey the orders of Moshe. Following Hashem's instructions, Moshe went to search for the rock that had hidden the well of Miriam. However, since all the rocks looked the same, Moshe was unsure which rock was the one which had hidden the special

well. He spoke to one of the rocks, but nothing happened. Then suddenly a rock came before him and so Moshe realised that this must be the right rock. However, instead of speaking to the rock, Moshe hit the rock. Suddenly, small droplets of water came out of the rock, but this was barely enough water to feed three people, never mind the whole nation. So Moshe hit the rock again. This time a stream of water burst forth and began flowing from the rock. Everyone was very thirsty and quickly came towards the stream to drink water. Yet, while the Jewish people rejoiced, Hashem was very upset. He was upset that Moshe had not obeyed His orders and had hit the rock. As a result, some of the rebellious Jews began to mock Moshe saying that the rock did not listen to him and therefore he had to hit it even though Hashem told him not to. Moshe's mistake resulted in a very harsh punishment: Moshe did not merit to bring the Jewish people into the land of Israel. Although Moshe led the Jewish people from Egypt, through the desert and to the borders of Israel, he himself never entered the land of Israel.

Now the Jewish people are very close to entering the land of Israel. On the way, they pass through the land of Edom. The king of Edom was very powerful and refused to allow the Jewish people to pass through his land, so they had no choice but to travel around it. Tired and hungry, the Jewish people complained to Moshe again. Hashem was very upset with the complaint of the Jews and He decided to punish them. The next morning, instead of sending manna to the Jewish people, He sent snakes to bite them. He sent snakes because snakes have no sense of taste. To a snake, everything tastes like dust, yet they don't complain. Immediately, the Jewish people realised that they had sinned and did Teshuva. Hashem then commanded Moshe to create a copper snake and place it in a place where all the Jewish people could see it. When the Jewish people saw the snake they realized that it wasn't the snake that killed many Jews, but rather, it was the sin of the Jews which caused Hashem to send the snakes to kill them.

Parashat Chukat also tells us about Aharon's death at the age of 123 years. While the Jewish people are camped at the bottom of Mount Hor, Moshe, Aharon and Aharon's son, Elazar, ascend the mountain and enter a cave where they find a bed with linens and a burning candle. Moshe removes Aharon's High Priest garments and places them on Elazar. Aharon then lays down on the bed. The cloud of glory completely covers Aharon and his soul returns to Hashem. When Moshe and Elazar return to the Jewish people they have many questions. Where is their beloved Aharon? They accuse Moshe and Elazar of killing Aharon. Hashem then orders angels to lift Aharon's coffin for the Jewish people to see. The Jewish people then realise that it was time for Aharon to return his soul to His maker. Now, without Aharon, the cloud of glory that protected the Jewish people disappears. From now on the Jewish people are guided by the Aron (Ark). The Aron also protects the Jewish people from their enemies.



While the Jewish people are mourning the passing of Aharon, they come to the land of the Emorites, whose boundary was on the Arnon river. On either side of the river stood a tall mountain. On the one mountain there were caves, and on the other were sharp stones. The Emorites knew that the Jewish people had to pass these two mountains on their way to Israel and so they planned on killing the Jewish people as they passed through the mountains. They hid in the caves so that they could throw stones at the Jewish people as they traveled by. Unfortunately for the Emorites (but fortunately for the Jews), Hashem had other plans. As the Emorites readied themselves to attack the Jewish people, Hashem uprooted the mountain with the caves from its place and moved it closer towards the second mountain. The stones of the second mountain stuck into the caves in the first mountain and crushed the Emorites. Hashem then returned the first mountain back to its place and the mountain threw all the dead bodies into the river. When the Jewish people passed by the river they immediately realised the big miracle that Hashem had performed for them and sang songs of praises to Hashem thanking Him for saving them.

Mission: Stop, and thank Hashem for everything He has done for you.

**It was great seeing you in Shule!
We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family!
Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew**

