

**פרשת**  
**חוקת**  
*Parashat Chukat*

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*Bamidbar / Numbers 19:1-22:1, Isaiah 66:1-24*  
*Matthew 21:1-17*

### **Belonging to God**

This week's Torah portion opens with the ashes of the red heifer and those who contract impurity due to touching the dead. We read how one is to sanctify the Lord by obeying what the Lord says one should do when becoming ritually impure due to touching the dead. After seven days having followed God's command, one is purified by the ashes of the red heifer. The concept being brought out here is how one sanctifies the Name of God by doing what the Lord says he/she should do. Notice the context of the Torah portion which goes on to describe how the people failed to sanctify God's name twice (once in the wilderness of Zin, *20:2-4*, and once more when they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, *21:4-6*). In addition to this, Moshe and Aaron also failed to sanctify the name of the Lord at the waters of Meribah (*20:8-13*). Parashat Chukat reveals to us failing to sanctify the name of God led to sickness, illness, and death in addition to being stricken by the enemy (i.e. the serpent). How many people today are sick, ill, or dying because they fail to sanctify the name of God in their lives? The Apostle Paul drew out this context when speaking on eating together as opposed to coming together to eat the Lord's supper according to *1 Corinthians 11:17-32*.

### ***1 Corinthians 11:17-32***

*11:17 But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 11:18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. 11:20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 11:21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 11:22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 11:27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 11:28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 11:32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (NASB)*

Paul speaks of gathering together to partake in the Lord's table, however some people took it as an opportunity to just eat and get drunk. The point was to take seriously what we have been taught concerning the Messiah and the Lord's table (referring to the Passover and the breaking of bread). An important point to make here is how Paul speaks of "*eating*" and "*drinking*" is pertaining to a meal, as opposed to eating a wafer (unleavened bread) and grape juice only. This was a reference to the Passover meal. Note that the breaking of bread refers to the Lord's table in the sense of the Passover. The context given to us here by Paul is of the Passover (see *1 Corinthians 11:24-25*). Here we find the people partaking in these things in an unworthy manner and thus become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. They had failed to sanctify the Name of the Lord, Yeshua the Messiah. Paul writes that *11:28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. (NASB)* This is in reference to being repentant verses being unrepentant. Paul writes that *11:32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (NASB)* The issue with the people in the wilderness was found in their unrepentant lifestyles just as we read in *Bamidbar / Numbers 20:3* וִירָב הָעָם עִם־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאָמֵר וְלוֹ גּוֹעַנּוּ בְּגֹעַ אַחֲיֵינוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה *20:3 The people quarreled with Moses, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished at the instance of the LORD!* A similar line of thought may be running through Paul's words that the people who partake in the Passover were not examining themselves, judging themselves, seeking forgiveness, and repenting, thus becoming guilty before God as a result. Note how Ein Yaakov comments on the one who quarrels with his master. (*This could be a relevant concept in relation to not sanctifying the name per this week's portion.*)

### ***Ein Yaakov on Sanhedrin 11:126***

*R. Chisda said: "He who quarrels with his master is considered as if he would quarrel with the Shechina, as it is said (Num. 26, 9) At the time they quarreled against the Lord." R. Chama b. Chanina said: "He who murmurs against his master is considered as if he would*

*murmur against the Shechina, as it is said (Ib. 20, 13) These are the waters of Meribah, where the children of Israel quarreled with the Lord.” And R. Chanina b. Papa said : “He who murmurs against his master is considered as if he would do so against the Shechina, as it is written (Ex. 16, 8) Not against us are your murmurings, but against the Lord.” R. Abahu said: “Even one who meditates evil against his master is considered as if he meditates evil against the Shechina, as it is said (Num. 21, 5) And the people spoke against God and against Moses.” (Eccl. 5, 12) Riches reserved for their owner to his own hurt. Resh Lakish said: “This refers to the riches of Korah.” (Deut. 11, 6) And all . . . on their feet. R. Elazar said “This refers to their money which makes one stand on his feet.” And R. Levi added : “The keys of Korah’s treasure were of such weight that three hundred white mules had to carry them. All its keys and locks [usually of metal] were of leather [to make it easy to carry].”*

The rabbinic concept here of *“the one who quarrels with his master is considered as if he quarrel with the Shechina.”* This teaches us that our hearts are not to be given to complaint. The multiple references to the Shechina reveals to us the presence of God is always amongst us, those who belong to Him and obey His commands. The concept here is the Lord God having given us His Word, we know what we should be doing, we know how we should respond, according to the Torah, to love our neighbor as ourselves (see *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:9-18*), and to help our enemies (*In Parashat Mishpatim, What the Torah says is, when your enemy is in trouble, come to his assistance. That way, part of the hatred will be dissipated.*) The Torah speaks of those who trust in themselves as opposed to those who trust in the Lord. The one’s who trust in the Lord will prosper, they will stand, they will raise up and be lifted up, etc. Again note what was going on in the deliverance of the people from Egypt (a costal region, low) and standing before God at Sinai and the Promised Land (an elevated position) as symbolic of the Lord drawing His people close to Himself and giving them His

Words. The significant aspect of this week's Torah portion coupled with the rabbinic commentaries is to sanctifying the Name of God in our lives. This means that we are to take God's Word and ascend, to go up, to raise up to apply God's Word to our lives. This is the definition of bearing God's testimonies. This is the requirement of Torah that is relevant for all of God's children, both Jew and Gentile. To trust in the Lord with all of our heart (to have Faith), and to live our lives for Him (to be Faithful) walking in the footsteps of the Messiah Yeshua.

In Parashat Chukat there is a lot that is going on, we learn of (i) The law to deal with uncleanness, (ii) Moshe and Aaron are unfaithful to the Lord bringing water to the people, (iii) Miriam and Aaron die, (iv) Snakes bite the people due to their unfaithfulness, and (v) War with the locals (king Sihon and Og). This week's Torah portion opens saying the following, *א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר | אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין-בָּהּ מוּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עֵל:*

*19:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: 19:2 “This is a requirement of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke. (NIV)*

Note here the Hebrew text states *זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה* “*this is a statute of the Torah.*” Here the English translators write Moshe says this is “*a requirement of the law that God has commanded.*” This suggests the word *חֻקַּת* may be translated as a requirement of God. The way this is written in the English translation, does this present a theological difficulty based upon what we have been taught for centuries in the Church that we are not obligated to obey God's Law? Note the requirement of our country's laws, how one must obey in order to live at peace with others. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Romans saying, *Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 8:4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh set*

*their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* (NASB <sup>1</sup>Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ: <sup>2</sup>ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. <sup>3</sup>τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου, ἐν ᾧ ἠσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, <sup>4</sup>ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα. <sup>5</sup>οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος.) The NASB translates “*dikaioma*” δικαίωμα as the “*requirement of the Law.*” Here Paul speaks of satisfying the requirements of the Torah and of being set free from the law of sin and death. These statements are very practical and tremendously important. What does Paul mean in *Romans 8:4* when he says the aim of the Messiah’s death is “*that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit?*” Are we to believe this to mean as modern theologies teach Christ fulfilled the law for us when he obeyed it perfectly and died as the perfect sacrifice on our behalf, and so we do not have to? If we examine what Paul writes very carefully, Paul says the righteous requirement of the law is being “*fulfilled in us,*” not “*for us*” or “*on our behalf,*” which Paul could have said very clearly if that had been what he meant. Paul is writing that this “*fulfillment*” is something happening *IN US*, and not something that is happening to us or for us by someone else (*Romans 5:19 or 2 Corinthians 5:21*). Paul focuses specifically here about our lives, a reference to our living for the Lord as the way of fulfilling the righteous requirement of the Torah by walking in the Spirit. The difficulty for Christians today is found in the theology that teaches the misconception that the requirement of the Law was meant for man to earn his position and place in the covenant (*earning his salvation, i.e. Dispensationalism*) as opposed to having a life mixed with faith. The theologies that teach man earned his place in the covenant of God is a misrepresentation of the requirement of the Torah as is being spoken of here in this week’s Torah portion. So if this is the case, the question then is “*How do we fulfill the requirement of the law as being spoken of by Paul?*” The arguments brought against this interpretation is that our obedience in this life is imperfect, how can my imperfect obedience

be said to fulfill God's law which is holy and just and good. Does the Scriptures say "*pretty good will do?*" Has this been the argument that has led to the teachings today that the Torah is bad as opposed to what we read in the Scriptures as being holy, righteous, and true (*Tehillim / Psalms 119, Romans 7*). Let's discuss these things a little further in this week's Torah portion.

This week we are looking at *Bamidbar / Numbers 19:1-12*.

***Bamidbar / Numbers 19:1-12***

*19:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 19:2 'This is the statute of the law which the Lord has commanded, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel that they bring you an unblemished red heifer in which is no defect and on which a yoke has never been placed. 19:3 'You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be brought outside the camp and be slaughtered in his presence. 19:4 'Next Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. 19:5 'Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight; its hide and its flesh and its blood, with its refuse, shall be burned. 19:6 'The priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet material and cast it into the midst of the burning heifer. 19:7 'The priest shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward come into the camp, but the priest shall be unclean until evening. 19:8 'The one who burns it shall also wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water, and shall be unclean until evening. 19:9 'Now a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and the congregation of the sons of Israel shall keep it as water to remove impurity; it is purification from sin. 19:10 'The one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening; and it shall be a perpetual statute to the sons of Israel and to the alien who sojourns among them. 19:11 'The one who touches the corpse of any*

*person shall be unclean for seven days. 19:12 'That one shall purify himself from uncleanness with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he will be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. (NASB)*

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר-צִוֶּה יְהוָה לֵאמֹר דְּבַר | אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אִין-בָּהּ מוּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עֵל: ג וּנְתַתֶּם אֹתָהּ אֶל-אֱלֻעֶזֶר הַכֹּהֵן וְהוֹצִיא אֹתָהּ אֶל-מַחֲוֵץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְשַׁחַט אֹתָהּ לְפָנָיו: ד וְלָקַח אֱלֻעֶזֶר הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּמָה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְהִזָּה אֶל-נֹכַח פְּנֵי אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד מִדָּמָה שְׂבַע פְּעָמִים: ה וְשָׂרַף אֶת-הַפָּרָה לְעֵינָיו אֶת-עֶרְוָה וְאֶת-בְּשָׂרָהּ וְאֶת-דָּמָהּ עַל-פְּרִשָׁה יִשְׂרָף: ו וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן עֵץ אַרְזוֹ וְאִזּוּב וְשָׂנִי תוֹלַעַת וְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֶל-תּוֹךְ שָׂרֶפֶת הַפָּרָה: ז וְכִבֶּס בְּגָדָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֵר יָבֵא אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ח וְהִשְׂרַף אֹתָהּ יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו בַּמַּיִם וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ט וְאַסֹּף | אִישׁ טְהוֹר אֶת אֶפְרַת הַפָּרָה וְהֵנִיחַ מַחֲוֵץ לַמַּחֲנֶה בְּמָקוֹם טְהוֹר וְהִיטָה לְעֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת לְמִי נִדָּה חֲטָאת הוּא: י וְכִבֶּס הָאִסָּף אֶת-אֶפְרַת הַפָּרָה אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְהִיטָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלָגֵר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם: יא הַנִּצֵּעַ בְּמִית לְכָל-נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְטָמֵא שְׂבַעַת יָמִים: יב הוּא יִתְחַטָּא-בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִטְהַר וְאִם-לֹא יִתְחַטָּא בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לֹא יִטְהַר:

### ***Bamidbar / Numbers 21:4-9***

*21:4 Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. 21:5 The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.' 21:6 The Lord sent fiery serpents among*



*the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 21:7 So the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you; intercede with the Lord, that He may remove the serpents from us.' And Moses interceded for the people. 21:8 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.' 21:9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived. (NASB)*

ד וַיִּסְעוּ מֵהָר הַהָר דְּרָדָּךְ יָם-סוּף לְסָבֵב אֶת-אֶרֶץ  
אֲדוּם וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשׁ-הָעָם בְּדֶרֶךְ: ה וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בְּאֵלֵהֶם וַיִּבְ-  
מֹשֶׁה לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתֵנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לָהֶם וַאֲיִן  
מַיִם וַנִּפְשְׁנוּ קָצָה בַלָּחֶם הַקָּלֵקֵל: ו וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בְּעָם אֶת  
הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרָפִים וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ אֶת-הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִם-רַב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:  
ז וַיָּבֹא הָעָם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ חֲטָאנוּ כִּי-דִבַּרְנוּ בִיהוָה וְכַךְ  
הִתְפַּלֵּל אֶל-יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר מֵעֲלִינוּ אֶת-הַנְּחָשׁ וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד  
הָעָם: ח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לָּךְ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ  
עַל-גֹּס וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנִּשְׁוֹף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וְחָי:

The way the Torah portion for this week is organized teaches us something in regards to the relationship of the Torah for our lives today. Parashat Chukat may be summarized in the following way:

### Summary

1. The requirement of the law to deal with uncleanness.
2. Moshe and Aaron are unfaithful to the Lord bringing water to the people.
3. Miriam and Aaron die.
4. Snakes bite the people due to their unfaithfulness.

## 5. War with the locals (Sihon and Og).

This week's Torah portion states, זאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה “*this is a statute of the Torah.*” Here the English translators write Moshe saying there is “*a requirement of the law that God has commanded.*” This suggests the word חֻקַּת may be translated as a requirement of God. Consider what the Torah provides for us. The Torah provides for us lessons to be learned about life, that are described in our portion as being effective for cleansing from sins. What the Torah provides for us is the context of Teshuvah, turning from sin and the importance of turning towards the ways of God. Those who have little understanding on the matter claim the Torah calls for extreme measures for the repentant sinner. The point of the Torah commands however are that we are to strive for balance in our lives, to seek the Lord and His righteous ways, while yet relying upon the Lord for His mercy in our imperfection. This is how we are to strive to fulfill the requirement of the Torah, and how it is being fulfilled “*in us*” walking in the Spirit, according to the Apostle Paul, regardless that we walk imperfectly. This is not about promoting the idea of “*pretty good will do.*” The Lord never places a condition on us to be absolutely perfect in every way in order to maintain our salvation. The Torah speaks of maintaining our faith in the Lord and His Salvation, that is connected to our having the motivation to continue on in the faith through Teshuvah (repentance), and to seek the righteousness of God by choosing to walk in the footsteps of His Messiah.

In regards to the requirements of the Torah, the rabbis have the following to say concerning *Bamidbar / Numbers 19:2*.

### ***Sforno on Bamidbar / Numbers 19:2 Part 1***

*When the Torah in Numbers 8,7 had spoken of the need to sprinkle the waters of “chatat” on the Levites in order to purify them before they would begin their function newly assigned to them, our sages (Yuma 16) had already referred to the procedure as a chukkah, a statute, adding that these kinds of statute must not be questioned and probed as they are in the nature of a decree issued by G’d. The wise King Solomon, when mention-*

*ing that he had striven to unravel the wisdom in this legislation admitted that he had failed, that it was beyond him. (Kohelet 7,23). The thing which is most baffling in the red heifer legislation is that most who is ritually pure becomes ritually contaminated by direct contact with it, although the whole purpose of the red heifer, its ash, etc., is to purify the people who had been ritually contaminated prior to being sprinkled with spring water containing its ashes.*

*However, when we examine the entire commandment in detail we find that some of the people concerned with that red heifer from the moment it has been burned after having been slaughtered become ritually contaminated, i.e. the person burning its carcass, the person collecting its ashes, as well as the ones throwing the cedar wood as well as the one using the hyssop and crimson thread into its burnt ashes. The same applies to all those either touching the remains or carrying them.*

*By contrast, the person performing the sprinkling with the mixture of the ash and water as well as the one sanctifying the location where the red heifer is to be burned and the one lighting the fire prior to burning the slaughtered red heifer are not contaminated by their activities. One of the principal conditions concerning the red heifer is the requirement that it must not even have 2 hairs that are white or black. The symbolism of the colour red is supplied by the prophet Isaiah 1,18 who writes that even if your sins are as red as certain type or wool dyed red they can become white as snow under certain conditions of remorse.*

*Our sages considered this line so important that they used to tie a red string to the entrance of the Sanctuary when the scapegoat was thrown down on the Day of Atonement. This string would turn white as proof*

*that the people's sins had been forgiven. When this happened the people would rejoice for the remainder of that day, whereas when it failed to turn white they would be greatly saddened. (Yuma 67)*

*We must remember that seeing that in the words of Solomon (Proverbs 30,5) אמרת ה' צרופה, "everything G'd has said is absolutely pure, refined," He has no doubt kept in mind that all extremes are looked upon with disfavor so that His legislation must represent what Maimonides called the "golden mean." Solomon himself described any perversion as something deserving total failure. (compare Proverbs 28,18).*

Sforno speaks of the command on the waters of Chatat for the cleansing from uncleanness. He speaks of choosing to follow God's ways and parallels this to attempting to rectify something that has become bent out of shape. He then describes what happens when a man attempts to bend what was bent in the opposite direction in order to straighten (make right what went wrong). This interestingly enough will not restore a bent object to its previous condition due to the stress and strain on the material (i.e. think of physical properties of a piece of metal). This is what happens in our lives too, when we sin, the stress and strain of sin changes us fundamentally on the inside. Sforno says the procedure in the Torah is meant to completely reverse what was done in order to straighten out what went wrong. The point is the Torah command of the waters of Chatat, the ash of the red heifer was effective in the context of ritual impurity only when the ritual impurity was caused by direct or indirect contact with a dead person's body. Any other kind of ritual contamination, such as blood of menstruation, dead creeping things, and a number of other causes leading to ritual defilements are not treated by the procedure described here. The Torah is trying to teach us something in regards to sin and death. The purification ritual, these waters are described as a mixture composed of two extremes, the residue of pure water and the ashes of death. Sforno states merging these two extremes (symbolically) is the way of regaining the path known as the "*golden mean.*" This is what it means to strive for balance in our lives

by seeking the Lord and His righteous ways in the Torah in the midst of our imperfections. This combination teaches us that this *“golden mean”* is a description of our imperfect lives that are balanced in faith and repentance, that is coupled to our striving to walk in God’s ways of righteousness, holiness, and truth. Note how these things are met with our reliance upon the mercy of God (His grace). Sforno states the Lord God considers טהרה, ritual purity, as spelled out in the Torah’s description of the function of the Day of Atonement, מכל חטאתיכם לפני ה’ תטהרו *“you will become purified from all your sins before (against) the Lord,”* (Vayikra / Leviticus 16:30). There are many aspects to this command which yields valuable lessons for our lives as God’s people. The most important point is that we are imperfect creatures and need to daily seek the mercy of God! We are called to walk in the service of the Lord according to His word as we look forward to being with the Lord God of Israel and His Messiah in the world to come. Our obedience to the Torah is preparation for this future expectation.

Because of the anti-Torah theologies of today, the condition of the people of God is riddled with divorce, teenage pregnancy and illicit drug usage, etc which mirrors those of secular society. For example, the anti-Torah theologies have led to problems in the teaching and understanding of Scripture in relation to the issue of homosexuality *“still being sin.”* No longer are homosexuals staying away from Christianity. Rather, they are challenging Christianity’s hypocrisy regarding the *“Law of God,”* using the Christian argument that the Law is done away with, and that we are now under the *“law of love.”* These problems are symptoms of a much greater problem, that the Christian church is not built upon the rock of Torah coupled with the Messiah, rather it is built upon the shifting sands of anti-Torah doctrines (see *Matthew 7:24-27*) that stand in opposition to Yeshua teachings to listen and obey the Torah. The question is did Yeshua Consider a Relationship to Torah to be Important? The modern theologies today would say, *“No, we are saved by faith alone, so all of this ‘Torah is for believers’ stuff is not important.”* I have had family say this very thing. This brings out an important point about the Gospel message. According to the Apostolic Writings, the Gospel Message is much broader than one may realize due to the modern theologies today. If we examine Paul’s teachings in his epistles, note the number of topics Paul speaks and teaches upon. In

*Romans 1:8-15*, Paul says of the Romans their faith in Yeshua is known throughout the world. He then states that he hopes to go to Rome and preach to them the Gospel Message. The question is however, based upon modern theologies, if they have faith that Yeshua is the Messiah, they have been taught the Gospel Message. What is Paul talking about when he says that he is eager to preach to them the Gospel Message? To teach it again? This is the Gospel message, Paul believes the Gospel Message is related to how to live for the Lord, how to live with one another, our relationships with those who are around us, including those of our enemies, and how these things are related to our relationship with God. The Torah teaches us these things are all connected to our relationship with the Lord. The point is that there is a problem in the modern church's definition of "*faith*." The modern Christian definition of "*faith*" is not the same as that of the Jewish Messiah and His first century Jewish contemporaries and the Jewish writers of the Apostolic Writings. The Christian definition is concerned with what you believe, whereas in Judaism, the focus is on a relationship that is grounded in trust and obedience to the Torah. The book of James stresses this point particularly in *James 2:19*, where he states that "*believing*" in God is meaningless if one divorces faith from a trusting relationship that is grounded in the works of the Torah. Yeshua clearly states this view according to *Matthew 5:17-7:28* by establishing two facts, (i) If you think any of the Torah is done away with, you are mistaken. (*Matthew 5:17-18*) and (ii) If you teach people that they do not have to regard the Torah, you will answer to Him. (*Matthew 5:19-20*) Yeshua concludes these passages by expanding upon what he is saying, and speaks of a future time when certain people will not be allowed into heaven because they practice lawlessness (anomia, ἀνομία) (*Matthew 7:21-23*). Note something about the significance of his statements in *Matthew 7*, at this point when certain people will not be allowed into heaven, does he rebuke these people for "*not believing He is the Messiah?*" Or, "*not having invited Him into their hearts?*" Or, "*not having said the 'sinner's prayer?'*" NO! He states they who practice lawlessness (anomia, ἀνομία) will not enter into his kingdom. Ever wonder what Law they have violated in their lawlessness? If we study the context of what Yeshua is speaking of in *Matthew 7:21-23*, he is expounding upon the Torah. Note that the same Greek word for lawlessness, anomia (ἀνομία),

is used in *1 John 3:4*, to describe those who commit sin, and in *2 Thesalonians 2:7*, to describe the anti-Messiah who is opposed to God's truth. These people Yeshua is speaking to at a future time in *Matthew 7* are not unbelievers (pagans or atheists). He is speaking to those who are in the church and they are shocked when he rebukes them. They claim to be a part of his people calling him Lord. This reveals to us something very dangerous. There is a religion contained within Christianity of a people who "say" they are followers of the Messiah, but claim they no longer have a relationship to the Torah that meets the descriptions of *Matthew 7:23*. The scary point is that the church theologies meet this description. The idea is that the church itself could be in grievous error regarding God's Word in regards to what it means to have true faith in the God of Israel. The scarier concept here is the very theology of "the Church" as described as having begun at Pentacost, neglects the fact that the ekklesia is the Kahal of Israel, and is a product of the anti-Torah and anti-God-of-Israel replacement theology of today. This is a serious problem since this is a willful Scripture mistranslation and deception (anti-Torah theologies) that have been taught for thousands of years. The interesting thing is, in light of all of these things, people will continue in their error and unfaithfulness.

In the narrative for this week's Torah portion, we read the people continuing in their unfaithfulness and the Lord brought serpents to turn them away from their unfaithfulness. Rashi has the following to say concerning this portion of the Scriptures.

***Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:8 Part 1***

על נס. על פְּלוֹנָס, שְׁקוֹרִין פִּירְקָא אֲפֻלְעוּ, וְכֵן "וְכַנֵּס עַל הַגְּבֻעָה" (ישעיהו ל'), "אָרִים נְסִי" (שם מ"ט), "שָׂאוּ נֵס" (שם י"ג); וּלְפִי שֶׁהוּא גְבוּעָה לְאוֹת וְלְרֵאָה, קוֹרְאוּ נֵס: עַל נֵס *means [SET IT] UPON A POLE which is termed perche in O. F. Similar is, (Isaiah 30:17) "And like a polo (banner) upon the hill"; (Isaiah 49:22) "I will lift up my pole (banner)"; (Isaiah 13:3) "Lift up a banner." Because it is lofty so that it can serve as a sign and as evidence of something it is called נֵס, something raised on high (cf. Rashi on Exodus 20:17).*

### *Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:8 Part 2*

כל הנשוד. אָפְלוּ כָּלֵב אוֹ חֲמוֹר נוֹשְׁכוֹ הָיָה נִזְוֵק וּמִתְנוּנָה  
וְהוֹלָה, אֲלֵא שְׁנֵשִׁיכַת הַנֶּחֱשׁ מִמְהָרַת לְהַמִּית, לְכֹף נֶאֱמַר  
כִּאֵן וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ — רָאָה בְעֵלְמָא — וּבְנֵשִׁיכַת הַנֶּחֱשׁ נֶאֱמַר  
”וְהִבִּיט” — וְהָיָה אִם נִשְׂף הַנֶּחֱשׁ אֶת אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט וְגו’ —  
שְׁלֵא הָיָה מִמְהָר נִשְׂף הַנֶּחֱשׁ לְהִתְרַפְּאוֹת אֲלֵא אִם כֵּן מִבִּיט  
בּוֹ בְּכּוֹנֵנָה; וְאָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ וְכִי נֶחֱשׁ מִמִּית אוֹ מְחַיֶּה? אֲלֵא,  
בְּזִמְן שְׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְסַתְּפְלִין כְּלִפֵּי מַעְלָה וּמִשְׁעַבְדִּין אֶת  
לְבָבָם לְאַבְיָהֶם שְׁבַשְׂמִים הָיוּ מִתְרַפְּאִים, וְאִם לֹא הָיוּ נִמְוָקִים  
אֲלֵא *ANYONE THAT IS BITTEN* — *even though a dog or ass had bitten him, he felt  
the effects of the injury and became enfeebled more and more (cf. Tanchuma); only that the bite of a serpent kills  
more speedily. On this account it is stated here: וְרָאָה*  
אֹתוֹ, “*whoever has been bitten, when he seeth it, [shall live]*” — *a mere glance sufficed to heal him. But in the  
case of the serpent’s bite it is stated וְהִבִּיט, and he gazed* — *“and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any  
man, when he gazed [at the brazen serpent, he lived]”, for the serpent’s bite was not so quick to heal unless he  
gazed intently (cf. Jerusalem Talmud Rosh Hashanah 3:9). — Our Rabbis said: But could the copper serpent  
cause death or life?! But the explanation is that when the Israelites in gazing at the serpent looked up on high  
and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they were healed, but if they did not do this they waste  
away (Rosh Hashanah 29a).*

Yeshua used these Scriptures in reference to himself being lifted up and all men being drawn to him. Because of our unfaithfulness, the Lord God of Israel brought His Messiah and lifted Him up in a similar way in order to draw men to Himself. Rashi states that when the bronze serpent was lifted up, men were not merely to glance upon the image to be healed. They needed to gaze intently with purpose and faith upon the one being lifted up in order for the serpent bite to be healed. The



explanation is through this image the people were to subject their hearts in repentance to their Father in heaven in order to be healed. This is the point and purpose of the Torah in our lives that directs us to the Messiah, the One who was lifted up on our behalf. We are to gaze intently with purpose and faith, and to subject our hearts in repentance to the Father in heaven. The Torah instructs us to subject our hearts and our lives to the Lord God of Israel by walking in the footsteps of Yeshua the Messiah. This includes dying to self, putting to death this sinful body. This is part of our gazing intently upon the Messiah, believing by faith, and orchestrating our lives to fall in line with God's word as His people. This week's Torah portion details these things for our lives providing us the context of Teshuvah, turning from sin and turning toward the ways of God. We are called to strive for balance in our lives, to seek the Lord and His righteous ways, while yet relying upon the Lord for His mercy in our imperfection. This is how we are to live, to fulfill the requirement of the Torah, and how it is being fulfilled "*in us*" according to the Apostle Paul. This is not about promoting the idea of "*pretty good will do,*" because the Lord never places a condition on us to be absolutely perfect in every way in order to maintain our salvation. Note how this is a foundational teaching of modern theologies which state man was imperfect and so the Lord had to bring His Messiah for the gift of grace thus canceling the Law. The Torah leads us in the way of turning and returning to faith in the God of Israel. We are called to be motivated by love to continue on in the faith through Teshuvah (repentance), and to seek the righteousness of God by choosing to walk in the footsteps of His Messiah. We are motivated by the love of God and His Messiah to live our lives for the Lord and to seek the Lord's help to do so. This is why Yeshua said "*Go and make disciples of all nations.*" (*Matthew 28:19*) We do so according to God's Word and instruction on how to live for the glory of God.