

# פרשת חוקת *Parashat Chukat*

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

## Why **MUST** the Messiah be Lifted Up? A Torah-Based Perspective

In this week's Torah portion we read about the laws of becoming unclean by touching the dead and how to become ritually clean. (*Bamidbar / Numbers 19:1-22*) Miriam (Moshe's sister) dies (*20:1*). Moshe and Aaron sin before the Lord before the people at the waters of Meribah and are not allowed to enter the Promised Land. (*20:2-12*) Aaron dies and the high priesthood is given to Eleazar his son. (*20:22-29*) And the people grumble again about the food and water and the Lord God sends fiery serpents biting the people, killing them, and Moshe makes a bronze serpent lifting it up so the people who had faith looking upon the serpent would not die from the serpent bite. (*21:1-20*) The Torah states the following regarding the situation that led up to the complaint and the fiery serpents in *Bamidbar / Numbers 21:4-7*, וַיִּסְעוּ מִהָר הַהָר דְּרֹךְ יַם-סוּף לְסֹבֵב אֶת-אֶרֶץ אֲדוּם, וַתִּקְצַר נֶפֶשׁ-הָעָם בְּדֶרֶךְ: הַ וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בְּאֱלֹהִים וּבַמֶּשֶׁה לְמָה הָעֲלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לָחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וַנִּפְשְׁנוּ קָצָה בַלְחָם הַקָּלִקֵּל: וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בְּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ אֶת-הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִם-רַב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: ז וַיָּבֹא הָעָם אֶל-מִשֶּׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ חָטָאנוּ כִּי-דִבַּרְנוּ בַיהוָה וּבָךְ הַתָּ- *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. (NASB)* According to Parashat Shelach Lecha, the Lord God decreed a major punishment to the people due to their rebellion by refusing to enter the Promised Land. In Parashat Korach we read about another rebellion where a group of people wanted to take control of the priesthood questioning Aaron and Moshe and the Levities as those who will perform the services in the Tabernacle. In this week's Torah portion, we read about the people complaining again against both God and Moshe for their current situation and of there not being the kind of food they desired and that there was no water. An interesting nuance about the narrative in the Torah portion is how Israel went to Edom asking to pass through their land and Edom refused. We are told the people had to travel around the land of Edom in order to get to their destination. The detour around the land of Edom coupled with the type of food they were given to survive on, the Manna (bread from heaven) this type of food might not have been "heavy" enough to last in their stomachs due to their traveling, and it might have happened that they became hungry more quickly (*Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:5 Part 2*) As soon as the food was digested, they felt their hunger and complained. According to *Midrash Rabbah on Bamidbar Parashat 19 Part 21*, the reason the Torah introduced the fiery serpents and the peoples complaints by mentioning the detour around Edom was because there remained a remnant of the earlier generation who had nothing to look forward to but death in the desert during the coming years. Their present situation seemed hopeless and so they became a generation of complainers. As a result, the people despised both God and Moshe in their hearts and they reaped the consequences for their actions.

The *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 110a* states the following:

***Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 110a***

א"ר חנינא בר פפא כל המתרעם על רבו כאילו מתרעם  
 על השכינה שנאמר (שמות טז, ה) לא עלינו תלונותיכם  
 כי (אם) על ה' א"ר אבהו כל המהרהר אחר רבו כאילו  
 מהרהר אחר שכינה שנאמר (במדבר כא, ה) וידבר העם  
 באלהים ובמשה

*Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa says: Anyone who expresses resentment against his teacher for wronging him, it is as though he is expressing resentment against the Divine Presence, as it is stated: "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" (Exodus 16:8). Rabbi Abbahu says: Anyone who suspects his teacher of wrongdoing, it is as though he suspects the Divine Presence, as it is stated: "And the people spoke against God, and against Moses" (Numbers 21:5). The verse likens God and Moses with regard to this matter.*

The Talmud describes the danger of despising someone in the heart, the one whom God has provided as a leader and teacher and the Lord Himself are both spoken against here in the biblical text. What we are being shown here is how the people had become guilty of slander against the heavenly manna and by doing so, they slandered God and Moshe in the process. The rabbis say that seeing their sin consisted of lashon hara (לשון הרע), the Lord God sent the creature that invented slander, the serpent. The rabbinic interpretation on the manna, the food God had given the people (the bread from heaven) was a kind of food that had all sorts of different tastes that was in accordance with the one who is eating, whatever he/she wanted. This is connected to the desert place, a dry, dusty place, that is void of the pleasures of food and drink. It is interesting how this desert place is the habitat of the snake based upon the curse upon the animal from *Bereshit / Genesis 3:14* "dust you shall eat all the days of your life!" In the desert, the Lord God had protected the people from being bitten until this point. Back in Parashat Shelach Lecha, we are told the Promised Land is be-

ing given to Israel, that they should go up and take the Land because *“their protection”* (the nations) has been removed from them. Here we find in Parashat Chukat, the protection of the people of God has been removed due to their despising God in their hearts. We are created after God’s image according to the Torah, and our nature, we were designed to love God and to love others. This situation of despising God and others (Moshe) led to the snake attack for a particular purpose. (*i.e. Snakes symbolise slander ever since the time Eve was tricked by a snake into eating from the tree of knowledge, see Talmud Bavli Taanit 8*) The reason the Torah does not write that *“God sent snakes against the people”* but writes הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרָפִים ha’nakhashim ha’seraphim *“the snakes which are seraphim”* underlies the point of this punishment. For example, in *Shemot / Exodus 8:17*, Moshe told Pharaoh that God would punish him by an invasion of wild beasts. Moshe did not say that God was going to send against Pharaoh wild beasts, but that there would be an invasion of wild beasts. This meant that the beasts would leave their normal habitat, they would change their nature to invade the urban areas. A similar thing is happening here in the case of the serpents leaving their natural habitat (the desert place) and harming the people of Israel those who were unfaithful to God by despising Him in their hearts. Because of this, the Lord God of Israel commanded Moshe to build a bronze Saraf (שָׂרָף, serpent) and elevate (lift it up, place it upon a standard) the Torah writes וַיִּשֶׂם ה' וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲתוֹ עַל-גֹּסֶן (אֶל-מִטְּשֵׁה עֲשֵׂה לָּךְ שָׂרָף וַיִּשֶׂם אֲתוֹ עַל-גֹּסֶן וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנִּשְׁוֹף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וְחָי). Notice how the Hebrew text states that this Saraf is to be placed upon a miracle (גֹּסֶן) so that all who are bitten (הַנִּשְׁוֹף) will see it and live. This caused the people to recognize something that is occurring on the inside that consists of both despising God and His Anointed One which is being connected to the destruction of the body by the poison of the serpent due to the consequences of sin. (*Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:8 Part 2*)

The Scriptures that we are looking at for this week are from *Bamidbar / Numbers 21:1-20*.

***Bamidbar / Numbers 21:1-20***

*21:1 When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, then he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. 21:2 So Israel made a vow to the Lord and said, 'If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.' 21:3 The Lord heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah. 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. 21:10 Now the sons of Israel moved out and camped in Oboth. 21:11 They journeyed from Oboth and camped at Iyeabarim, in the wilderness which is opposite Moab, to the east. 21:12 From there they set out and camped in Wadi Zered. 21:13 From there they journeyed and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that comes out of the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the*



*Amorites. 21:14 Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord, 'Waheb in Suphah, And the wadis of the Arnon, 21:15 And the slope of the wadis That extends to the site of Ar, And leans to the border of Moab.' 21:16 From there they continued to Beer, that is the well where the Lord said to Moses, 'Assemble the people, that I may give them water.' 21:17 Then Israel sang this song: 'Spring up, O well! Sing to it! 21:18 'The well, which the leaders sank, Which the nobles of the people dug, With the scepter and with their staffs.' And from the wilderness they continued to Mattanah, 21:19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth, 21:20 and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the land of Moab, at the top of Pisgah which overlooks the wasteland. (NASB)*

א וַיִּשְׁמַע הַכְּנַעֲנִי מִלֶּדְ-עֶרְדַּי יֹשֵׁב הַנְּגֹב כִּי בָא יִשְׂרָאֵל  
דְּרֹךְ הָאֲתָרִים וַיִּלְחָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁבֹּ | מִמֶּנּוּ שָׁבִי: ב וַיֵּדַר  
יִשְׂרָאֵל נָדָר לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִם-נָתַן תַּתֵּן אֶת-הָעַם הַזֶּה בְּיַדִּי  
וְהִתְרַמְתִּי אֶת-עֲרִיקָהֶם: ג וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתֵּן  
אֶת-הַכְּנַעֲנִי וַיִּתְּרֵם אֹתָהֶם וְאֶת-עֲרִיקָהֶם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם  
חֶרְמָה: פ ד וַיִּסְעוּ מֵהַר הַהָר דְּרֹךְ יַם-סוּף לְסַבֵּב אֶת-  
אֶרֶץ אֲדוּם וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשׁ-הָעַם בַּדְּרֹךְ: ה וַיְדַבֵּר הָעַם בְּאֶ-  
לֵהִים וּבַמֶּלֶשָׁה לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם לָמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אִין  
לָחָם וְאִין מַיִם וְנִכְשָׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלָּחָם הַקָּלֵקֵל: ו וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה  
בְּעַם אֵת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים וַיִּנְשָׁכוּ אֶת-הָעַם וַיָּמָת עִם-רַב  
מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: ז וַיָּבֹא הָעַם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ חֲטָאנוּ כִּי-דִבַּרְנוּ  
בַּיהוָה וּבָדָה הַתְּפִלָּל אֶל-יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר מֵעֲלֵינוּ אֶת-הַנְּחָשׁ וַיִּתֵּן-  
פֶּלֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד הָעַם: ח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לָךְ  
שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל-גִּיס וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנִּשְׂוֹף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וְחָיָ:  
ט וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נְחָשׁ נְחָשׁ וַיִּשְׁמְהוּ עַל-הַגִּיס וְהָיָה אִם-  
נִשְׂוֹף הַנְּחָשׁ אֶת-אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט אֶל-נְחָשׁ הַנְּחָשׁ וְחָיָ: [ששי]  
י וַיִּסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּחַנוּ בְּאֲבֹת: יא וַיִּסְעוּ מֵאֲבֹת וַיִּחַנוּ  
בְּעֵי הָעֲבָרִים בַּמִּדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי מוֹאָב מִמִּזְרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

יב מִשֶׁם נִסְעוּ וַיִּחַנוּ בְּנַחַל זָרַד: יג מִשֶׁם נִסְעוּ וַיִּחַנוּ  
 מֵעֵבֶר אֲרִנוֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבַּר הַיַּצְא מִגְּבֹל הָאֱמֹרִי כִּי אֲרִנוֹן  
 גְּבוּל מוֹאָב בֵּין מוֹאָב וּבֵין הָאֱמֹרִי: יד עַל-כֵּן יֹאמֶר בְּסִפּוֹר  
 מִלְחַמַּת יְהוָה אֶת-וְהֵב בְּסוּפָה וְאֶת-הַנְּחָלִים אֲרִנוֹן: טו  
 וְאֲשֶׁד הַנְּחָלִים אֲשֶׁר נָטָה לְשִׁבְתָּ עַר וַנִּשְׁעַן לְגְבוּל מוֹאָב:  
 טז וּמִשֶׁם בְּאֶרֶה הוּא הַבְּאֵר אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה לְמֹשֶׁה אֲסֹף  
 אֶת-הָעַם וְאֶתְנָה לָהֶם מַיִם: ס יז אֲזַיְשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-  
 הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת עָלַי בְּאֵר עֵנוּ-לָהּ: יח בְּאֵר חֲפְרוּהָ שָׂרִים  
 כְּרוּהָ נְדִיבֵי הָעַם בְּמַחֲקָק בְּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּם וּבְמִדְבַּר מִתְּנָה: ט  
 וּבְמִתְנָה נַחְלֵי־אֵל וּמִנְחָלֵי־אֵל בְּמוֹת: כ וּבְמַבְמוֹת הַגִּיָּא אֲשֶׁר  
 בְּשִׂדֵּה מוֹאָב רֹאשׁ הַפְּסָגָה וַנִּשְׁקָפָה עַל-פְּנֵי הַיַּשְׁיִמֹן:

It is interesting how Yeshua used this Torah portion (Parashat Chukat) to describe the necessity of being born new by the power of God according to *John 3*. Yeshua describes this process of being transformed (changed) from the inside by the power of God as being born new. This transformative process is described as a supernatural event in a persons life according to *John 3:1-18*.

### ***John 3:1-18***

*3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 3:2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’ 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?’ 3:5 Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 3:6 ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 3:7 ‘Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 3:8 ‘The wind blows where it wishes*

*and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ 3:9 Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’ 3:10 Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? 3:11 ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. 3:12 ‘If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 3:13 ‘No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. 3:14 ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 3:15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 3:16 ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 3:17 ‘For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 3:18 ‘He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (NASB)*

Yeshua describes these things speaking of heavenly power in our lives to transform us for God’s glory. Note how Nicodemous states that they know he is a teacher sent from God. This is connected to Moshe teaching and instructing the people. Notice how this also is connected to the Talmudic discussion on despising a teacher from God and its connection to Parashat Chukat. (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 110a*) Yeshua speaks to Nicodemus about what we see and are able to testify of, and what we are not able to see, and yet we are able to testify of what God is doing in our lives. (3:11-12) He then provides an example from the Torah describing the one who ascended into heaven, and allusion to Moshe, and then to the one who has descended from heaven, the Messiah of God, the manna (the bread from heaven), the Son of Man. The concept of ascending and descending draws in the



Torah context by referencing Moshe at the mountain of Sinai. Yeshua then described this event in the Torah from Parashat Chukat which describes the story of the הַנֶּחֱשִׁים הַשָּׂרָפִים “*the fiery serpents*” saying, *3:14 ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 3:15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. (NASB)* The idea being provided here is connected to the condition of a man without God (despising and not loving God or others) and the poisonous bite that destroys the body, and the one who has faith to look upon a the Seraph and live, surviving the consequence of lashon hara (לשון הרע). Remember the rabbinic interpretation on lashon hara is connected to idolatry, murder, adultery, and all of the sins of mankind. In the *Talmud Bavli Taanit 8*, the rabbis say in the messianic future the other wild beasts will ask the serpent why it kills with a poisonous bite seeing it does not receive a physical satisfaction out of the damage it causes? The serpent replies with the verse (*Kohelet / Ecclesiastes 10:11*) אין יתרון לבעל הלשון “*the slanderer does not get anything out of his slander.*” The serpent then asks “*why not ask the same question of the slanderer? What does he get out of spreading lies against people?*” The interpretation follows that the people continued to slander God and Moshe. Therefore, the Lord God sent serpents which are said to have been created by their slanderous remarks. The rabbis provide the interpretation on why the Torah describes these fiery serpents as the הַנֶּחֱשִׁים הַשָּׂרָפִים and why in *Bamidbar / Numbers 21:8* the Lord said to Moshe the following *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.’ (NASB, וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לְךָ נָחָשׁ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל-יָגוֹם וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנִּשְׁוֹף וְרָאָה אֶתוֹ וְחָי* Note here the Lord speaks to Moshe using the word שָׂרָף rather than נָחָשׁ. The reason being, the people’s slander created two kinds of serpents, the נָחָשׁ was a poisonous bite which destroyed the body, and the שָׂרָף which is the one that destroys the soul. (*Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:6 Part 1*) The rabbis interpret this saying “*in this instance the נחשים were the result of their slander against Moses, whereas the שרפים were the result of the Israelites having misrepresented what G’d had*

*done. The Midrash mentions that the שרפים were the punishment for what they said against G'd, as these serpents burn the soul."*

The interpretation on why the serpent had to be lifted up was due to the people not having sufficiently repented. (*Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:8 Part 4*) This aspect of being faced with death led to the people truly being repentant for what they had done. The most important element of repentance is an undertaking not to again become guilty of the sin one asks God to be forgiven of. The people had failed to mention this kind of repentance on their part. This is why their affliction had not been removed when Moshe prayed for them. The symbolism of the snake being lifted up was meant to awaken the need to repent properly such that when they looked they needed faith to also be healed.

The commentary Or HaChaim states there are seven things that we learn from this. (*Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:6*)

1. If we keep our tongues silent and do not whisper (לחזש) slanderous remarks, the snake will be as harmless as the reproduction Moses had made and placed on a pole. (Keeping our hearts pure.)
2. The Israelites would be prompted to recognise the nature of their sin. The people were to recognise that their slanderous comment had been responsible for placing the serpent in such a high position. They had been guilty of exactly what the original serpent had done when it made slanderous remarks about God who is so High.
3. They were to realize the difference between a serpent which crawls on earth, which is the lowest of the low and brings death in its wake, and the serpent constructed by Moses and placed high on a pole which brought life in that it revived people who had been bitten by the deadly poison of a snake. This should remind the people that they had spoken out against the manna and had professed their preference for bread grown in the

ground.

4. The copper snake on the pole was designed to awaken in the Israelites the need to do Teshuvah concerning their complaint that God had led them through a desert in which their needs could not be provided instead of leading them on a route where there was grain and regular bread. They were to realize that the reason God who dwells in the heavens had done so was to make them totally dependent on Him for their sustenance and all their other needs and that there is no other source on which they could rely.
5. God also wanted to counter the criticism implied in the people's reference to their having been led through inhospitable country which required miracles in order to keep them alive. We have a principle that one does not rely on miracles because miracles have a habit of failing to materialise when one needs them most. It is a fact that people who deny God's miracles endeavour to demonstrate by all kinds of deceptive devices that what are claimed to be miracles are in actual fact natural occurrences which had to occur at that particular time and at that particular place. The argument of these heretics is based on the fact that the so-called miracle occurred only once and only in a particular location. Inasmuch that the people might have harboured similar thoughts, God determined to demonstrate that He could maintain such miracles on a permanent basis by supplying the Jewish people with all their needs through miraculous means for a period of 40 years.
6. God wanted to demonstrate the power of true penitence. Our sages in Yuma 86 have said that if someone is a truly penitent person even his former sins will be accounted as merits for him, i.e. not only will he have his sins forgiven but they will be turned into meritori-

ous deeds.

7. God wanted that every individual Jew experience His miracles as something which had happened to him personally.

In the phrase, וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנִּשְׁחָרִים, *“it would be that everyone who had been bitten,”* the Torah used the word וְהָיָה which denotes something joyous rather than the word וַיְהִי which suggests something sad, this was to show the positive effect of having been bitten. A person who had to look up at the copper snake because he had been bitten learned seven lessons in faith that are listed above. This became a joyous experience for him, just as we are overjoyed by what Yeshua the Messiah had done on our behalf, bearing our sins upon the cross. The reason the Torah wrote כָּל-הַנִּשְׁחָרִים, *“everyone who had been bitten”* without adding the word *“by a snake,”* the rabbis say is because even people, who had sustained snake bites before the snakes had proliferated and Moses had made the copper snake as a result of the people’s slanderous remarks, were healed also if they looked up at the copper snake. The reason the Torah added the conjunctive letter ו at the beginning of the word וְהָיָה was to inform us that looking up at the copper snake also cured those people who had been bitten by a שָׂרָף the kind of snake that destroys their souls. (*Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 21:8 Part 13*)

The commentary Or HaChaim lays down the seven things we learn about this event of the fiery serpents. This is clearly connected to the need for the Messiah Yeshua to be lifted up according to *John 3*. Lashon hara draws in the concept of personal sin, where all sins are included. The lifting up is for recognizing our sins before God, and the need to personally repent before God and believe He is able to forgive, heal, and save both the body and the soul from death illustrated in the nakhsh and seraph. Our sin represents a slanderous action before God in relation to His commands and His way of life. The lifting up is designed to awaken the need to do Teshuvah (Repentance) and that we are totally dependent upon the Lord God in heaven for everything. The Lord God provides miracles to keep us alive each day. When we

breath, we have the breath of God on our lips that is sustaining us each day, and for this we should be thankful. Heretics claim miracles are not real, they occur only in select locations, and for select people, etc. The miracle of life however happens every day, in a new born child, or by our breathing each day, and this is paralleled to the miracle of being given bread from heaven for a period of 40 years. The lifting up led to God demonstrating the power of true penitence which leads to eternal life (*John 3:15*). If a person has faith and is truly repentant his sins will be forgiven him. And by the lifting up, the Lord God wanted every individual man, woman, and child to experience His miracle of salvation and life. These are the things that we find in Yeshua the Messiah being lifted up as the serpent was lifted up per the parallel given according to the Torah (Parashat Chukat) and John chapter 3. This is why there was and is a need for the Messiah to be lifted up! This is why there is an absolute need to believe in Yeshua the Messiah for the salvation of the soul. This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message go hand in hand!