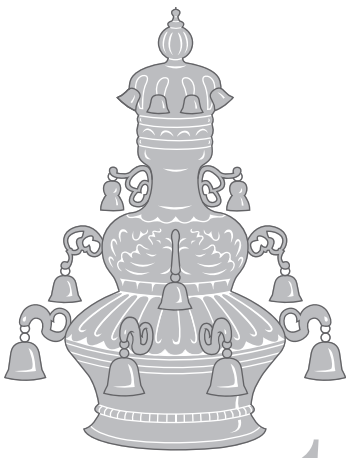




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∞
TORAH

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR
The Book of Numbers

Parshat Chukat

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*With an Interpolated English Translation
and Commentary Based on the Works of
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEMIDBAR

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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TORAH

חומש במדבר

THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*
וצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR
The Book of Numbers

Parshat Chukat



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חֻקַּת *Chukat*

Overview

Parashat Chukat takes its name from its opening passage, which describes the rite of purification from the defilement of death, using the ashes of a red cow. This rite is described as a *chukah*—a Divine legal “decree” without any rational explanation.

After describing the purification rite, the *parashah* begins the historical narrative of the people’s final years in the desert, starting with Miriam’s death and continuing with a further argument over water, the decree that Moses and Aaron die in the desert, the confrontation with Edom, Aaron’s death, a second confrontation with Amalek, the incident with the snakes, the miracles at the Zered River, and the conquests of the territories of Sichon, Ya’zer, and Og, leading the people to the edge of the Promised Land.

The Torah concluded its narrative of the first years in the desert—culminating in God’s decree that the generation of the Exodus die out in the wilderness, and its aftermath—in the previous *parashah*. Inasmuch as there is nothing really to say about the intervening years, it is quite logical that the narrative continue now with the events of the final years in the desert. But why are the laws of the purification rite wedged in between? These laws, like most of the laws in the Torah, were given during Moses’ first 40 days on Mount Sinai, long before the people began their trek into the desert. It would seem that the proper place for these laws is some where in the Book of Leviticus, together with the other laws of defilement and purification. If they belong anywhere in the Book of Numbers, it would be together with the narrative of the inauguration of the Tabernacle on the first of Nisan, 2449—somewhere in the second half of *Naso* or the first half of *Beha’alotecha*—for these rites were performed for the first time on the following day. Why are these laws placed here, and how does the name describing them, *Chukat*, apply to the historical events that make up the bulk of this *parashah*?

The answer to this enigma is to be found by examining the meaning of the term *chukah* and the underlying theme of the events in the latter part of the *parashah*. As we have seen previously, a *chukah* is a legal decree, a rule for which no logical reason is given. As opposed to the other two types of legislation in the Torah, “ordinances” (*mishpatim*) and “testimonies” (*eiduyot*), God does not appeal at all to our sense of reason in asking us to observe these rules. To observe them, we must invoke our supra-rational connection

to God, our commitment to follow His instructions implicitly, whether they speak to our mortal sense of logic or not.

This idea is allied with the more fundamental meaning of the word *chukah*, “chiseling” or “engraving.” A letter chiseled into a block of stone is part and parcel of that stone—not a second entity grafted onto it, as is the case with a letter written in ink on parchment or paper. The engraved letter cannot be erased from the stone (at least not without wearing away the stone itself); the connection between the letter and the stone is permanent, immutable. As such, it is the perfect metaphor for the level of our relationship with God invoked by observing His “irrational” rules: our irrevocable connection with Him, which transcends and overrides any considerations of logic.

The events described at the end of the *parashah* express this same level of relationship. We have seen previously that God originally promised Abraham the territories of 10 nations: seven Canaanite nations who lived between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and three others who lived on the other side of the Jordan. The Israelites were supposed to conquer the land of the seven nations first, when they entered it, and leave the conquest of the land of the other three nations for the messianic era.

But because Edom and Moab refused them passage, the people had to enter the land through just these territories that God had promised them in the future. Circumstances thus enabled them to conquer large parts of these lands even *before* they entered the lands of the seven Canaanite nations to conquer their territories. The originally intended order was reversed; they began to consummate the future even before actualizing the present. And once these lands were conquered, some of the people even started to settle them, aspiring to bring God’s promise into reality in its fullest sense.

We see, therefore, that the new generation, having grown up immersed in God’s presence and teachings in its desert academy, was fully imbued with the idealism of God’s mission and had its sights set on the ultimate goal of its Divine destiny. This new generation had learned from the mistakes of its predecessor’s spies and rebels, and did not subject its connection to God to the approval of human intellect. Its relationship with God was as pure as its parents’ had been when the Torah was first given and the Tabernacle first stood, and God’s mission and promise—in its fullest sense—was as much a part of their being as a chiseled letter is part of the stone in which it is engraved.

The lesson of *parashat Chukat*, thus, is that if we inspire ourselves to fulfill our Divine mission unconditionally, optimistically focused on our ultimate goal, God will grant us the opportunity to make our dreams come true and lead us to the threshold of the Promised Land, ready for the final Redemption, when the impurity of death will be but a memory and God’s promise to Abraham will be fulfilled in its entirety.¹

1. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 2, pp. 541-550; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1056.

— ONKELOS —

19:1 ומליל י' עם משה ועם אהרן למימרו: 2 דא גזרת אורייתא די פקיד י' למימר מלל עם בני ישראל ויסבון לך תורתא סמקתא שלמתא די לית בה מומא די לא סלק עלה נירא: 3 ותתנון יתה לאלעזר כהנא ויפק יתה למבאר למשריתא ויבוס יתה קדמוהי:

19:1 וידבר יהוה אל־משה ואל־אהרן לאמר: 2 זאת חקת התורה אשר־צוה יהוה לאמר דבר אל־בני ישראל ויקחו אליהם פרה אדמה תמימה אשר אין־בה מום אשר לא־עלה עליה על: 3 ונתתם אתה אל־אל־עזר הכהן והוציא אתה אל־מחוץ למחנה ושחט אתה לפני:

— RASHI —

שְׁתֵּיהָ תְּמִימָה בְּאֲדָמִימוּת, שֶׁאֵם הָיוּ בָּהּ שְׁתֵּי שְׁעֵרוֹת שְׁחֹרוֹת — פְּסוּלָה: 3 אֶלְעָזָר. מִצְוָתָהּ בְּסֻגָּן: אֵל מִחוּץ לַמִּחָנֶה. חוּץ לְשֵׁלֶשׁ מִחֲנוֹת: וְשָׁחַט אֶתָּה לִפְנֵי. זָר שֹׁחֵט וְאֶלְעָזָר רוֹאֶה:

2 זאת חקת התורה. לפי שהשטן ואמנות העולם מונגין את ישראל, לומר: מה המצוה הזאת ומה שעם יש בה? לפיכך כתב בה "חקת" — גזרה היא מלפני, אין לה רשות להרהר אחריה: ויקחו אליה. לעולם היא נקראת על שמך — פרה שעשה משה במדבר: אדמה תמימה.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

as a scapegoat. The process appears to be pointless.

We saw in the overview that the Torah's "rules" (*chukim*) express the level of our relationship with God that is "chiseled" into our very being. Now that we have differentiated between the rest of the Torah's "rules" and the rule *par excellence*, we can illustrate their differences in terms of two types of chiseling: chiseling letters into a stone and chiseling them all the way *through* a stone. In the first type of chiseling, the letters, though fashioned by removing part of the stone, are still formed by the part of the stone that remains. In the second type, however, the stone only *frames* the letters; the letters themselves are not made out of stone at all. The rite of the red cow is the latter type of chiseling; it is not grounded in the logical, solid reality of this world at all.⁶

This is the rule of the Torah: By calling this rite "the rule of the Torah" (rather than "the rule of purity" or "the rule of the red cow"), the Torah implies that there is something about it that is intrinsic to the Torah as a whole. There are indeed a number of lessons in this ritual that can apply to the entire Torah, but the most fundamental is the fact that it is a "rule," an expression of God's will devoid of rationale. Since there is no rational reason for this rite, we observe it purely out of devotion to God's will. Similarly, we should follow all God's commandments, even those for which there *is* a rationale, out of pure devotion to His will. For in truth, all God's commandments are expressions of His will and therefore deserve our full, unconditional commitment; it is just that the "rational" commandments have been garbed in rationality, while the others have not.⁷

In fact, there is a "reason" for this rite, but it is not an intellectual reason; it is not even based on God's intellect. It "makes sense" only in the overall context of God's *will*, which transcends intellect. Therefore, King Solomon, the wisest of all men, said of this rite, "I thought I could fathom it, but it eludes me."⁸

Moses, in contrast, was so selfless that he was acutely sensitive to God's will, and could therefore sense the "reason" behind this rite. Therefore, God did reveal the reason behind it to him.⁹

Because there *is* a Divine reason behind it, the intellect cannot oppose observing this commandment (and other "rules" like it), for the human intellect must logically admit that God's reason is greater than its own. This being the case, performing such commandments does not mean that we are acting without reason: there is indeed a reason behind them; it is just that we cannot fathom it.

Because of this, even the intellectually oriented Seleucids of the Hasmonean era did not oppose observing such commandments. What irked them was the Jews' unconditional commitment to performing God's will without any regard to whether doing so makes sense or not.¹⁰

3 And he shall take it outside the camp and slaughter it: All other sacrifices must be offered inside the Tabernacle precincts; only this one is offered outside. This is because all other sacrifices atone for inadvertent sins, which we commit because our animal nature makes us careless about spiritual concerns. Since our animal nature can be refined and co-opted into holiness, we can offer the sacrifices that accomplish this inside the Tabernacle. The

6. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 123-128. 7. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, pp. 1056-1057, vol. 13, p. 67. 8. Ecclesiastes 7:23; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:3. 9. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:6; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1057. 10. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 815.

The Rite of the Red Cow

After the rebellion of Korach, the people remained at Ritmah for 19 years and then wandered in the desert for another 19 years,¹ making 17 stops (see Figure 1).² God did not promulgate any laws during this whole time. The next historical event that the Torah records is the death of Miriam, which took place at the end of these 38 years. But before this, the Torah inserts the laws of ritual purification from impurity caused by contact with a corpse. Although God gave these laws on the first of Nisan, 2449, they are inserted here in order to link them conceptually with Miriam's death, teaching us that the death of the righteous purifies the living just as these rites do.³

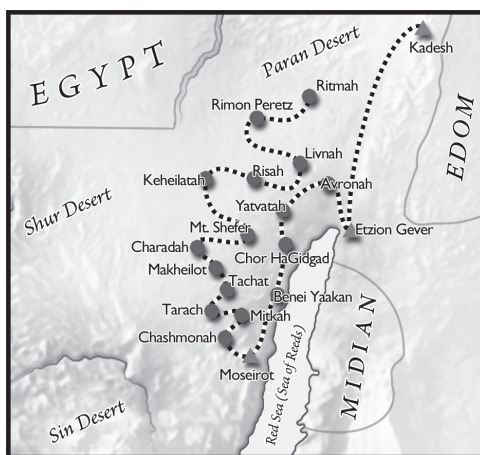


Figure 1: From Ritmah to Kadesh

19:1 God spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

2 “This is the quintessential rule of the Torah that God has commanded you to say to the people. It is a *rule*, without rationale, so do not expect it to make any sense to anyone. Speak to the Israelites and have them take for you, Moses, a totally red-haired, unblemished cow, upon which no yoke was ever laid.

3 And you shall give it to Eleazar, the assistant high priest, and he shall take it outside the camp of the Israelites, and a layperson shall slaughter it in his presence.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

2 This is the rule of the Torah: As we have seen previously,⁴ death is the antithesis of holiness, for God is the source of life and vitality. Thus, any contact with death or potential death produces *tumah*, the ritual defilement that excludes the individual from entering the Tabernacle (or later, the Temple), the realm of holiness and Divine vitality. When confronted with the reality of death, we become exposed to the contagious influence of the law of entropy: the natural reality that everything is decaying, dying, headed toward oblivion, and that life is futile and meaningless. This depressing worldview results in a spiritual paralysis, an unwillingness or inability to act positively, and is therefore diametrically opposed to our Divine mission, which asserts that there is purpose to life and affirms that fulfilling it is indeed possible.

In order to regain entry into the realm of pure life, the individual must undergo a purification process, which serves to cure his depression (real or potential) and reorient him toward the enthusiasm and vitality of holiness.

All the varieties of defilement in the Torah and their corresponding purification rites can be understood

in terms of their relative proximity to death. Clearly, though, the most fundamental form of defilement is the absolute, unmitigated apparition of death itself: a lifeless, human corpse. Because this form of defilement is the source of all others, its purification rite is the most extreme and mysterious in the entire Torah. As we said, the law of nature indeed decrees that sooner or later everything and everyone succumbs to death. To defy this law is to defy logic, and therefore, the rite of purification from death hails from a level of existence that defies logic; it is a “rule,” a seemingly arbitrary expression of God’s will, devoid of rationale and even contravening logic altogether, as we shall see.⁵

This is the rule of the Torah: The implication of this phraseology is that the rite described here is *the* rule of the Torah; that although there are other “rules,” only this one defies logic absolutely.

The lack of logic in the Torah’s other nonrational commandments lies in their selfcontradictions or inconsistencies. The preparation of the solution used to purify deathdefilement, however, is completely illogical: an animal is killed, but it is reduced to ashes; it is neither offered as a sacrifice nor used

1. Rashi on Deuteronomy 1:46. 2. Below, 33:19-36. 3. Rashi on 20:1. 4. On Leviticus 5:2. 5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1058.

— ONKELOS —

4 וַיִּסַּב אֶלְעֶזֶר בְּהֵנָא מִדְּמָה
בְּאַצְבָּעָה וַיְדִי לְקַבֵּל אִפִּי מִשְׁכָּן
זִמְנָא מִדְּמָה שְׁבַע זְמַנִּין: 5 וַיֹּקֶד
יֵת תּוֹרָתָא לְעִינוּהִי יֵת מִשְׁכָּה
וַיֵּת בְּשִׂרָה וַיֵּת דְּמָה עַל אוֹכְלָה
וַיֹּקֶד: 6 וַיִּסַּב בְּהֵנָא אֶעָא דְאַרְזָא
וְאַזְזוּכָא וַצִּבַּע וְזוּרִי וַיְרִמִי לְגו
יְקִידָת תּוֹרָתָא: 7 וַיִּצְבַּע לְבוּשׁוּהִי
בְּהֵנָא וַיִּסְחִי בְּשִׂרָה בְּמִיָּא וּבְתֵר
כֵּן יִיעוֹל לְמִשְׁרִיתָא וַיְהִי מִסָּאב
בְּהֵנָא עַד רַמְשָׁא: 8 וְדִמְלֹקֶד
יֵתָה יִצְבַּע לְבוּשׁוּהִי בְּמִיָּא וַיִּסְחִי
בְּשִׂרָה בְּמִיָּא וַיְהִי מִסָּאב עַד
רַמְשָׁא: 9 וַיִּכְנֹשׁ גִּבְר דְּכִי יֵת
קִטְמָא דְּתוֹרָתָא וַיִּצְנַע לְמַבְרָא
לְמִשְׁרִיתָא בְּאַתֵּר דְּכִי וְתֵהִי
לְכַנְשָׁתָא דְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁרָא
לְמִי אֲדִיּוּתָא חֲטָאתָא הִיא:

4 וְלָקַח אֶלְעֶזֶר הַכֹּהֵן מִדְּמָה בְּאַצְבָּעוֹ וַהֲזֶה אֶל־נֹכַח פָּנָיו
אֶהֱל־מוֹעֵד מִדְּמָה שֶׁבַע פַּעַמִּים: 5 וַיִּשְׂרֹף אֶת־הַפָּרָה לִּי־
עֵינָיו אֶת־עֵרָה וְאֶת־בְּשָׂרָהּ וְאֶת־דְּמָהּ עַל־פְּרִשָּׁהּ וַיִּשְׂרֹף:
6 וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן עֵץ אֲרָז וְאִזּוֹב וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וַהֲשִׁילֶךְ אֶל־
תּוֹךְ שְׂרָפַת הַפָּרָה: 7 וַכֹּסֶם בְּגָדָיו הַכֹּהֵן וּרְחִין בְּשָׂרוֹ
בְּפָמִים וְאַחֵר יָבֵא אֶל־הַמִּחְנֶה וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן עַד־הָעֶרֶב:
8 וַהֲשִׂרֹף אֹתָהּ יַכֹּסֶם בְּגָדָיו בְּפָמִים וּרְחִין בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּפָמִים
וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: 9 וְאַסָּף אִישׁ מַהוֹר אֶת אֹפֶר הַפָּרָה
וַהֲנִיחַ מַחוּץ לַמִּחְנֶה בְּמָקוֹם מַהוֹר וַהֲיִתָּה לְעֹדֶת בְּנֵי־
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת לְמִי נִדָּה חֲטָאתָא הִוא:

— RASHI —

לְעֹזֶרָה, לְטַל מִמֶּנּוּ בְּנֵי הָעִירוֹת וְכָל הַצָּרִיכִין לְהִטְהָרָה,
וְזֶה שֶׁבִּהְרַת הַמִּשְׁחָה — כִּהְנִים גְּדוֹלִים לְפָרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת
מִקְדָּשֵׁינוּ הַיָּמֵנוּ, וְזֶה שֶׁבִּהְלִי נִתֵּן לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת, מְגוֹרֵת
הַכְּתוּב, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַהֲיִתָּה לְעֹדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת":
לְמִי נִדָּה. לְמִי הַזִּיָּה, כִּמּוֹ: "וַיִּדּוּ אֲבָן בִּי", "לִידוֹת אֶת
קִרְנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם", לְשׁוֹן וְרִיקָה: חֲטָאתָא הִוא. לְשׁוֹן חֲטוֹי
כְּפִשׁוּטוֹ. וּלְפִי הַלְבוּתָיו קָרָאָה הַכְּתוּב "חֲטָאתָא", לוֹמֵר
שֶׁהִיא כְּקֹדְשִׁים לְהֶאֱסֹר בְּהֵנָּה:

4 אֵל נֹכַח פָּנָיו אֶהֱל מוֹעֵד. עוֹמֵד בְּמִזְבֵּחַהּ שֶׁל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
וּמִתְכַּוֵּן וְרוֹאֶה פִּתְחוֹ שֶׁל הַיֵּכָל בְּשַׁעַת הַזֹּאת הַדָּם: 7 אֵל
הַמִּחְנֶה. לְמִחְנֶה שְׁכִינָה, שְׁאֵין טָמֵא מְשַׁלַּח חוּץ לְשִׁתִּי
מִחֲנוֹת, אֲלָא זָב וּבַעַל קָרִי וּמִצְרַע: וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן עַד
הָעֶרֶב. סָרְסְהוּ וְדָרְשׁהוּ: וְטָמֵא עַד הָעֶרֶב, וְאַחֵר יָבֵא
אֵל הַמִּחְנֶה: 9 וַהֲנִיחַ מַחוּץ לַמִּחְנֶה. לְשִׁלְשָׁה חֻלְקִים
מִחֻלְקָה: אַחַת נִתֵּן בְּהֵר הַמִּשְׁחָה, וְאַחַד מִתְחַלֵּק לְכָל
הַמִּשְׁמֶרוֹת, וְאַחַד נִתֵּן בְּחֵיל. זֶה שֶׁל מִשְׁמֶרוֹת הִזָּה חוּץ

1. איכה ג, נג. 2. זכריה ב, ד.

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is to help us rise above our selfcenteredness, and this is expressed by selflessly helping our fellow Jew.¹³

The fact that the Torah tells us to take the red cow "for you," for Moses, means that we draw the inspiration and ability to be utterly selfless from Moses—from the original Moses, from the leaders of each generation, and from the "Moses" within each of us.¹⁴

9 Rather than being used, it will remain for the congregation of the Israelites as a keepsake: In our dedication to community, we can forget that we, too, can become defiled. Moreover, when we help someone else, our role of benefactor can give us delusions of grandeur. Finally, we must not compromise our standards of purity in other areas when we defile ourselves for someone else. For all these reasons, a portion of the ashes of the red cow is to be kept as a reminder for those who undertake to

purify their defiled brethren.¹⁵

12 On the third and seventh days he shall purify himself with it: In order to purify ourselves from the defilement of death—which in psychological terms means the paralysis of depression or a deadness toward the spiritual dimension of life—we must invoke the third and seventh emotional attributes of the soul. The third emotion is mercy or pity (*rachamim*), and the seventh emotion is lowliness (*shiflut*). The more we feel the pain our Divine soul suffers from its constricted consciousness in the material world, the more we are aroused to rescue it by studying the Torah and performing God's commandments. Thus, we address God in our prayers as the one "who resurrects the dead with abundant mercy."¹⁶ And the less egocentric we are, the less our self-interests block the flow of Divine life-force and vitality that should energize our lives.¹⁷

13. Tanya, chapter 32. 14. Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, p. 1059. 15. Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, p. 1060. 16. Daily Amidah, second blessing. 17. Likutei Torah 3:61cd.

4 Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and, standing east of the camp, directly facing the entrances of the Tent of Meeting and the courtyard, sprinkle it toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.

5 Someone shall then burn the cow in his presence; he shall burn its hide, its flesh, and its blood, with its dung.

6 The priest shall take a piece of cedar wood, a piece of hyssop, and some wool dyed crimson with the extract of the *tola'at* worm, and cast them into the burning cow.

7 By performing this rite, **the priest** becomes defiled. Therefore, in order to be allowed back into the Sanctuary precincts (i.e., the courtyard and the Tent of Meeting), he **must immerse his garments and immerse all his flesh in purifying water**—i.e., in a *mikveh* or suitable natural body of water—**and only then**, after nightfall, **may he enter the courtyard**, i.e., the **camp** of the Divine Presence, for even after his immersion, **the priest shall remain defiled until evening.**

8 The one who burns it also becomes defiled. He **must immerse his clothes in purifying water and immerse his body in purifying water, and** after his immersion **he shall remain defiled until evening.**

9 A ritually clean person shall gather the cow's ashes and place one third of them in a vial outside the Israelite camp in a ritually clean place. The priests will use these ashes to purify themselves before preparing the ashes of other red cows. Another third is to be placed in a vial outside the courtyard; the priests will use these ashes to purify anyone else. The last third will be placed in another vial outside the courtyard; rather than being used, it will remain **for the congregation of the Israelites as a keepsake of these ashes**, which are mixed with **sprinkling water** in order to be used for **purification** from ritual impurity, as will be explained presently. These ashes may be used only for purification purposes and nothing else.

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red cow, in contrast, is brought to purify us from the defilement of death, which cannot be refined or elevated—it must be totally annihilated; the red cow must be entirely reduced to inedible ashes. It therefore has no place inside the Tabernacle.¹¹

7-10 The priest...shall remain defiled until evening. The one who burns it...shall remain defiled until evening. ... The one who gathers the cow's ashes...shall remain defiled until evening: Herein lies the central paradox of the rite of the red cow: although the ashes purify the defiled, they also defile the pure.

In other words, the priests who prepare and administer the ashes must be prepared to leave the Tabernacle precincts and be defiled—temporarily excluded from all things holy—in order to purify their fellow Jews. It is this altruistic self-sacrifice,

the priests' willingness to transcend their personal interest, that elicits God's transcendent holiness and effects purification.

To be sure, God rewards all good deeds, and the priests surely know that in the long run they will only gain from putting aside their own purity and troubling themselves to purify their defiled brethren. But in order for the ritual to work, they cannot have this in mind; their motives must be pure.

From this example, we learn (1) how willing we should be to help another person reenter the dominion of purity and holiness, even if doing so requires us to become temporarily defiled ourselves, and (2) how much care we must take to ensure our motives are pure.

This is another way the rite of the red cow is "the rule of the Torah"¹²: the purpose of the whole Torah

11. *Likutei Torah* 3:58c; *Igeret HaKodesh* 28; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1058. 12. See above, on v. 2.

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10 ויצבע דבגש ית קטמא דתורתא ית לבושהי ויהי מסאב עד רמשא ותהי לבגיי ישראל ולגיויא דיתגיוון ביניהון לקים עלם: 11 דיקרב במיתא לכל נפשא דאנשא ויהי מסאב שבעא יומין: 12 הוא ידי עלוהי ביומא תליתאה וביומא שביעאה ידכי ואם לא ידי עלוהי ביומא תליתאה וביומא שביעאה לא ידכי: 13 כל דיקרב במיתא בנפשא דאנשא די מות ולא ידי עלוהי ית משכנא די סאיב וישתצי אנשא והוא משכנא ארי מי אדיותא לא אודיקו עלוהי מסאב יהי עוד סאבתה בה: 14 דא אורייתא אנש ארי מות במשכנא כל דעלל למשכנא וכל די במשכנא יהי מסאב שבעא יומין: 15 וכל מן דחסף פתיח דלית מגופת שייעי מקף עלוהי מסאב הוא: 16 וכל די יקרב על אפי חקלא בקטיל חרבא או במיתא או בגרמא דאנשא או בקברא יהי מסאב שבעא יומין: 17 ויסבון לדמסאב מעפר יקדת חטאתא ויתנון עלוהי מי מבוע למן:

10 וְכִכֶּם הָאִסָּף אֶת־אֶפֶר הַפָּרָה אֶת־בִּגְדָיו וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב וְהִיָּתָה לְבִגֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִגְדֵּי הָגֵר בְּתוֹכָם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם: 11 הִנֵּנֶע בְּמֵת לְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְטָמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: 12 הוּא יִתְחַטֵּא בָּו בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִטְהַר וְאִם־לֹא יִתְחַטֵּא בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לֹא יִטְהַר: 13 כָּל־הַנֵּנֶע בְּמֵת בְּנֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־יָמוּת וְלֹא יִתְחַטֵּא אֶת־מִשְׁכָּנוֹ יְהוֹה טָמֵא וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל כִּי מִי נָדָה לֹא־זֶרֶק עָלָיו טָמֵא יְהִיָּה עוֹד טָמֵאתוֹ בּוֹ: 14 וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אָדָם כִּי־יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל כָּל־הַבָּא אֶל־הָאֹהֶל וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר בְּאֹהֶל יִטָּמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: 15 וְכָל כָּלִי פְתוּחַ אֲשֶׁר אֵין־צֶמֶד פְּתִיל עָלָיו טָמֵא הוּא: 16 וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יָנַע עַל־פָּנָי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּחִלְל־חֶרֶב אוֹ בְּמֵת אוֹ־בַעֲצִים אָדָם אוֹ בְּקֶבֶר יִטָּמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: 17 וְלָקְחוּ לְטָמֵא מַעֲפֵר שְׂרֵפֶת הַחַטָּאת וְנָתַן עָלָיו מִיַּם חַיִּים אֶל־כָּלִי:

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מקבל טמאה מגבו אלא מתוכו, לפיכך אם אין מגופת צמידו פתולה עליו יפה בחבור — טמא הוא. הא, אם יש צמיד פתיל עליו — טהור: פתיל. לשון מקבר בלשון עברי. וכן: "נפתולי אלהים נפתלתים" — נתחברתי עם אחותי: 16 על פני השדה. רבותינו דרשו: לרבות גולל ודופק. ופשוטו: "על פני השדה", שאין שם אהל — מטמא חמת שם בנגיעה:

12 הוא יתחטא בו. באפר הזה: 13 במת בנפש. ואינו מת? של נפש "האדם", להוציא נפש בהמה, שאין טמאתה צריכה הוצאה. דבר אחר: "בנפש", זו רביעית דם: את משכן ה' טמא. אם נכנס לעזרה, אפלו בטבילה בלא הזאת שליש ושיביעי: עוד טמאתו בו. אף על פי שטבל: 14 כל הבא אל האהל. בעוד שהמת בתוכו: 15 וכל כלי פתוח. בכלי חרס הקטוב מדבר, שאין

3. בראשית ל, ח. 4. חולין עב, א.

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severity that Moses wondered how such defilement can be purified. Rather, it was because Moses, due to his constant connection to God, the source of life, could barely imagine how such a form of impurity could exist. How, he wondered, could contact with a corpse imperil a person's connection with the source of life? Life and death, holiness and evil, purity and defilement, exhilaration and depression—all of these are so mutually exclusive that the negative entities cannot possibly threaten the positive ones.

Initially, God did not answer Moses, because for someone on Moses' level, there is no answer to this question. Someone with Moses' purity of perception really is beyond the defilement of death. But when God did not answer, Moses realized that not every-

one is on his level of Divine consciousness and that most people can and do become defiled by contact with death. Fearing that the common people's very susceptibility to such defilement precluded their release from it, he became deeply concerned for their predicament.

It was then that God revealed to him the secret of the rites of the red cow. Logically, Moses was right: there is no way someone susceptible to the defilement of death should be able to be freed from it. But because of his deep concern, God showed him how this rite reaches beyond logic and elicits His infinite mercy, which is indeed capable of redeeming even an ordinary person from death.

10 The one who gathers the cow's ashes also becomes defiled and therefore **must** immerse himself and **his clothes** in purifying water, **and** after his immersion **he shall remain defiled until evening**. The following **shall be an everlasting rule for the Israelites and for the convert who resides in their midst**:

11 Anyone touching the corpse of a human being shall become defiled for at least seven days.

12 He may start counting these days as soon as he disengages from contact with the corpse, or on any day thereafter. **On the third and seventh days** of his count, **he shall purify himself** by being sprinkled **with** a solution made of ashes of the red cow, as will be described presently. After he is sprinkled on the seventh day, he must immerse and wait until nightfall,¹⁸ **and then he will be pure. But if he is not sprinkled with it on the third and seventh days, he shall not become clean.**

13 Whoever touches the corpse of a human being who dies or touches a *revi'it* of human blood **and does not purify himself** using the ritual ashes, and then enters the Sanctuary precincts, **has defiled the Tabernacle of God**, even if he has immersed. **That soul shall be cut off from Israel**—he will die prematurely and childless.¹⁹ For the sprinkling water was not sprinkled on him, so he remains defiled; his defilement remains upon him despite his immersion.

14 This is the law: if a man dies in a tent, anyone entering the tent and anything in the tent while the corpse is still in it **shall be defiled for at least seven days.**

15 Any open earthenware vessel in the room **that has no seal fastened around it becomes defiled**, but a properly sealed earthenware vessel does not become defiled. Metal vessels become defiled whether closed or not; stone vessels do not contract defilement.

16 In contrast, in an open field or other unenclosed area, a person does not become defiled by merely being in the presence of a corpse; only **anyone who touches a person slain by the sword, a corpse, a human bone, or a grave**, or even the top or side boards of a coffin, **shall be defiled for at least seven days.**

17 This is how to make the solution sprinkled on the ritually defiled person: a ritually pure person **shall take for that defiled person some of the ashes of the burnt cow used for purification, and he shall** put them into a vessel of spring water and **mix them with the spring water in that vessel.**²⁰

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17 They shall take for that defiled person: In the course of teaching Moses the Torah on Mt. Sinai, God taught him the laws concerning the various types of defilement and purification rites. The sages tell us that when they reached the subject of defilement by a corpse, God did not tell Moses right away how a person defiled this way can be purified. So Moses asked, but God still did not answer. Moses' face turned red out of consternation. Only after this did God teach him the rites of the red cow.²¹

Like the laws of the second Passover,²² the laws of this rite were always part of God's Torah, but He waited to reveal them until receiving some stimulus from below. In this case, it was Moses' concern over the plight of someone banished from the Tabernacle that elicited the laws of these purification rites.

As we have seen,²³ other types of defilement are, in certain ways, more severe than that caused by contact with a corpse. So it was not because of its

18. Below, v. 19. 19. See on Exodus 12:19. 20. *Mishneh Torah, Parah Adumah* 9:1. 21. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:4. 22. Above, 9:6-14. 23. Above, 5:1-3.

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18 וַיִּסַּב אֲזוּכָא וַיִּטְבֹּל בְּמִיָּא גִבְר דְּכִי וַיְדִי עַל מִשְׁכְּנָא וְעַל כָּל מִנְיָא וְעַל נִפְשָׁתָא דִּי הָווּ תַּמָּן וְעַל דִּיקָרְב בְּגִרְמָא אוּ בְקִטְיָלָא אוּ בְמִיתָא אוּ בְקִבְרָא: 19 וַיְדִי דְכִיָּא עַל מִסְאָבָא בְּיוֹמָא תְּלִיתָאָה וּבְיוֹמָא שְׂבִיעֵאָה וַיִּדְכֹּנָה בְּיוֹמָא שְׂבִיעֵאָה וַיַּצְבֵּעַ לְבוּשׁוֹהִי וַיִּסְחִי בְּמִיָּא וַיְדָבִי בְרַמְשָׁא: 20 וּגְבַר דִּי יִסְתָּאב וְלֹא יָדִי עֲלוּהִי וַיִּשְׁתַּצִּי אֲנָשָׁא הָהוּא מִגּו קְהֵלָא אֲרִי יֵת מִקְדָּשָׁא דִּי סְאִיב מִי אֲדִיּוֹתָא לֹא אֲזִירִיקוּ עֲלוּהִי מִסְאָב הוּא: 21 וְתַהִי לְהוֹן לְקִים עֲלֵם וְדִינִי מִי אֲדִיּוֹתָא יַצְבֵּעַ לְבוּשׁוֹהִי וְדִיקָרְב בְּמִי אֲדִיּוֹתָא יְהִי מִסְאָב עַד רַמְשָׁא: 22 וְכֹל דִּי יִקָּרְב בְּהָ מִסְאָבָא יְהִי מִסְאָב וְנָאֵשׁ דִּיקָרְב בְּהָ יְהִי מִסְאָב

◆ שני 18 וְלָקַח אֲזוּב וְטָבַל בַּמִּיָּם אִישׁ טָהוֹר וְהָזָה עַל-הָאֵהָל וְעַל-כָּל-הַכְּלִים וְעַל-הַנִּפְשֹׁת אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ-שָׁם וְעַל-הַנֶּגַע בַּעֲצָם אוּ בַחֲלָל אוּ בַמֵּת אוּ בַקֶּבֶר: 19 וְהָזָה הַטָּהוֹר עַל-הַטְּמֵא בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהִטָּאוּ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַכִּבֵּם בַּגִּדִּי וּרְחִץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהַר בָּעֶרֶב: 20 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִטְמָא וְלֹא יִתְחַטָּא וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִתּוֹךְ הַקְּהָל כִּי אֶת-מִקְדָּשׁ יְהוָה טָמָא מִי נִדָּה לֹא-זֶרֶק עָלָיו טָמָא הוּא: 21 וְהִיתָה לָהֶם לַחֲקֵת עוֹלָם וּמִזָּה מִי-הַנִּדָּה יַכֵּם בַּגִּדִּי וְהַנֶּגַע בְּמִי הַנִּדָּה יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: 22 וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יִנְעֲבוּ הַטְּמֵא יִטְמָא וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ הַנֶּגַעַת תִּטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: פ

— RASHI —

אדם: תמימה. על שם ישראל שהיו תמימים ונעשו בו בעלי מומין, תבא זו ותכפר עליהם ויחזרו לתמונתם: לא עלה עליה על. כשם שפרקו מעליהם על שמנים: אל אלעזר הכהן. כשם שנקהלו על אהרן, שהוא כהן, לעשות העגל. ולפי שאהרן עשה את העגל, לא נהנה עבודה זו על ידו, שאין קטיגור נעשה סניגור: ושרף את הפרה. כשם ששרף העגל: עץ ארז ואזוב ושני תולעת. שלשה מינין הקלו, כנגד שלשת אלפי איש שנפלו בעגל. וארז הוא הגבוה מכל האילנות ואזוב נמוך מכלם, סימן, שהגבוה שנתגאה וקטן, ישפיל את עצמו כאזוב ותולעת, ויתכפר לו: למשמרת. כמו שפשע העגל שמור לדורות לפרענות, שאין לה פקדה שאין בה מפקדת העגל, שנאמר: "וביום פקדי ופקדתי וגו'". וכשם שהעגל טמא כל העוסקין בו, כך פרה מטמאה כל העוסקין בה, וכשם שנטהרו באפרו, שנאמר: "ויזר על פני המים וגו'", כך "ולקחו לטמא מעפר שרפת הקטאת וגו'":

19 וְהִטָּאוּ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי. הוא גמר טהרתו: 20 וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא וגו'. אם נאמר "מקדש", למה נאמר "משכן" וכו', כדאיתא בשבועות: 21 וּמִזָּה מִי הַנִּדָּה. רבותינו אמרו, שהמזה טהור, וזה בא ללמד, שהנושא מי חטאת — טמא טמאה חמורה לטמא בגדים שעליו, מה שאין כן בנוגע. וזה שהוציאו בלשון "מזה", לומר לה שאין מטמאין עד שיהא כהן שעור הזאה: וְהַנֶּגַע וגו' יִטְמָא. ואין טעון כבוס בגדים: 22 וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִנְעֲבוּ הַטְּמֵא הוּא שְׁנִטְמָא בַּמֵּת — "יטמא": וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ הַנֶּגַעַת. בו בטמא מת: תטמא עד הערב. כאן למדנו, שהמת אבי אבות הטמאה והנוגע בו אב הטמאה ומטמא אדם. והו פרושה לפי משמעה והלכותיה. ומדרש אגדה העתקתי מיסודו של רבי משה הדרשן, וזהו: וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלָיו. משלָהם, כשם שהם פרקו גומי הזהב לעגל משלָהם, כך יביאו זו לכפרה משלָהם: פרה אדמה. משל לכן שפחה שטנף פלטין של מלך, אמרו: "תבא אמו ותקנח הצואה". כך, תבא פרה ותכפר על העגל: אדמה. על שם: "אם יאדימו כתולע", שהחטא קרוי

5. טו, ב. 6. יומא ד, א. 7. ישעיה א, יח. 8. שמות לב, לד. 9. שם, כ.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

Moses' example is worthy of following: when we realize that there are people who, for whatever reason, cannot enter the precincts of holiness, this should concern us deeply. And now that, thanks to

Moses, the means exists to purify these people, we should do all in our power to bring them back to the fold of purity and holiness.²⁶

26. Hitva'aduyot 5746, vol. 2, pp. 775 ff.

- ◆ **Second Reading 18** A ritually pure person shall take some **hyssop** and **dip it into the water** into which some of the ashes of the red cow have been mixed **and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, and on the people who were in it, and on anyone who touched the bone** of a dead person, **the slain person himself, the corpse** of someone who died some other way, **or the grave**.

19 The ritually pure person shall **sprinkle** the solution **on the defiled person on the third and seventh days** of his count, **and he shall** thus finish **purifying him** with these rites **on the seventh day**. The person being purified **shall** afterwards immerse **his clothes** and immerse himself **in purifying water, and then he shall become ritually pure in the evening**.

20 It was stated above²⁴ that a defiled person who enters the Tabernacle defiles it. The same will be true of the Temple: **If a person becomes defiled and does not purify himself** before entering the Temple, **the soul** of that person **shall be cut off from the congregation**—he will die prematurely and childless—**for he has defiled the Sanctuary of God. The sprinkling water was not sprinkled upon him; he is therefore still defiled**.

21 **This shall be for them as a perpetual rule: anyone who carries the sprinkling water**—but only if he carries at least enough to **sprinkle** with—becomes defiled and **must** therefore immerse himself and **his clothes**, and then he becomes pure after nightfall. In contrast, **one who only touches the sprinkling water** also becomes defiled and must immerse himself and **remains defiled until evening**,²⁵ but his *clothes* do not become defiled and do not require immersion.

22 **Whatever the person** who has been **defiled** by contact with a corpse **touches shall become defiled, and anyone touching** such a person **shall become defiled**, but only **until evening**, for by touching the person who came in contact with a corpse he has only contracted a derivative form of defilement.”

Allegorically, the ritual of the red cow atones for the sin of the Golden Calf, as follows:

- *Have them take for you:* from their own money, since they offered their own jewelry to make the calf.
- *A cow:* so the mother (a cow) can clean up the mess made by the child (the calf).
- *An unblemished [one]:* to restore the people's perfection marred by the calf.
- *Upon which no yoke was laid:* to atone for the fact that they cast off the yoke of heaven.
- *And you shall give it to Eleazar:* and not to Aaron, since Aaron played a part in the sin.
- *Someone shall then burn the cow:* just as Moses burned the calf.
- *The priest shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson wool:* three entities to correspond to the 3000 men who were executed for sinning with the calf, and to

²⁴ V. 13. ²⁵ An exception is the one who *sprinkles* the ashes on defiled entities (above, vv. 18-19), who remains pure even though he touches and carries the ashes.

— ONKELOS —

עד רמזשא: 20:1 ואתו בני ישראל
כל כנשתא למדברא דצן בירתא
קדמאית ויתב עמא ברקם ומיתת
תמן מרים ואתקברת תמן: 2 ולא
היה מים לכןשתא ואתכנשו על
משה ועל אהרן: 3 ונצא עמא עם
משה ואמרו למימר ולוי דמתנא
במותא דאחנא קדם יי: 4 ולמא
אעלתון איתיתון ית קהל לא יי
למדברא דדין לממת תמן אנהא
ובעירנא: 5 ולמא אסקתונא
ממצרים לאיתא יתנא לאחרא
בישא דדין לא אתר כשר לבית
זרע ואף לא תאנין וגופנין ורמונין
ומיא לית למשת: 6 ועל משה
ואהרן מן קדם קהל לתרע משכן
זמנא ונפלו על אפיהון ואהרן
יקרא דיי להון: 7 ומליל יי עם
משה למימר: 8 סב ית חטרא
ואכנש ית כנשתא את ואהרן
אחור ותמללון עם ביפא לעיניהון
ויתן מוהי ותפק להון מים מן ביפא
ותשקי ית כנשתא וית בעיריהון:
9 ונסיב משה ית חטרא מן קדם
יי כמא די פקדה:

20:1 ויבאו בני־ישראל כל־העדה מדבר־צן בחדש
הראשון וישב העם בקדש ותמת שם מרים ותקבר שם:
2 ולא־היה מים לעדה ויקהליו על־משה ועל־אהרן:
3 וירב העם עם־משה ויאמרו לאמר ולו נוענו בגוע
אחינו לפני יהוה: 4 ולמה הבאתם את־קהל יהוה אל־
המדבר הזה למות שם אנחנו ובעירנו: 5 ולמה העלית
תנו ממצרים להביא אתנו אל־המקום הרע הזה לא
מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן ורמון ומים אין לשות: 6 ויבא
משה ואהרן מפני הקהל אל־פתח אהל מועד ויפלו על־
פניהם וירא כבוד־יהוה אליהם: פ

◆ שלישי (שני במחברין) 7 וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר:
8 קח את־המטה והקהל את־העדה אתה ואהרן אחיך
ודברתם אל־הסלע לעיניהם ונתן מימיו והוצאת להם
מים מן־הסלע והשקית את־העדה ואת־בעירים: 9 ויקח
משה את־המטה מלפני יהוה כאשר צוהו:

— RASHI —

שכל ארבעים שנה היה להם הבאר בזכות מרים: 3 ולא
גוענו. הלואי שגוענו: בגוע אחינו. במיתת אחינו בדבר.
למד שמיתת צמא מגנה ממנה: בגוע. שם דבר הוא,
כמו "במיתת אחינו", ולא יתכן לפרשו "כשמתו אחינו",
שאם כן היה לו להזכר "בגוע": 8 ואת בעירים. מכאן
שחס הקדוש ברוך הוא על ממונם של ישראל:

1 כל העדה. עדה השלמה, שכבר מתו מתי מדבר ואילו
פרשו לחיים: ותמת שם מרים. למה נסמכה פרשת
מיתת מרים לפרשת פרה אדמה? לומר לה: מה קרבנות
מכפרין, אף מיתת צדיקים מכפרת: ותמת שם מרים.
אף היא כנשיקה מתה. ומפני מה לא נאמר בה: "על פי
ה"? שאינו דרך כבוד של מעלה. ובאהרן נאמר: "על
פי ה'", ב"אלה מסעי"³¹: 2 ולא היה מים לעדה. מכאן,

10. במדבר לג, לח.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

2 The well that had accompanied the people...in her merit: Water helps the body digest its food, ensuring that the nutrients in the food are absorbed properly throughout the body. Allegorically, the soul's "food" is the Torah, and its "water" is the Torah's ability to reach and influence all parts of the soul, all types of people, and all facets of life—even those that in and of themselves are the least receptive to it.

As we have seen,³¹ Miriam was devoted to the continuity of the Jewish people, particularly by ensuring that there would be a new generation to carry on God's mission. Because of her efforts to ensure that the Torah would continue to "flow" into the next generation, even reaching and speaking to children, the people's source of water in the desert existed in her merit.³²

31. On Exodus 1:15 ff. 32. Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, p. 335; Sefer HaArachim Chabad, vol. 2, cols. 186-187.

indicate that a sinner, who is as haughty as a cedar, should lower himself like a hyssop or the worm that produces the crimson dye in order to repent.

- *He shall place them...for a keepsake:* for the sin of the Golden Calf is punished whenever any other sin is punished.
- *One who touches the sprinkling water remains defiled:* just as the calf defiled the people, the cow defiles all those involved with it.
- *He shall take...some of the ashes...and sprinkle...on the defiled person:* just as the people were atoned for by the ashes of the calf.

Miriam's Death and its Aftermath

20:1 The Torah now resumes the historical narrative. After those who had participated in the sin of the Golden Calf finished dying off, it was possible to resume the journey toward the Land of Israel. Their first stop on this leg of their journey, their 18th stop since leaving Ritmah, was the city of Kadesh, at the border of Edom. **The entire congregation of the Israelites** destined to enter the Land of Israel **arrived at the desert of Tzin** on the first of Nisan, **the first month**, in the year 2487, **and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there** in the tranquil manner that will be described later²⁷ as “by God’s kiss,” on the 10th day of the month,²⁸ **and was buried there.**

2 Now that Miriam had died, the well that had accompanied the people on their journeys in her merit disappeared. **The congregation had no water, so** all of them except the tribe of Levi²⁹ **assembled against Moses and Aaron.**

3 **The people argued with Moses, and said, “If only we had died by the plague, the way our brothers perished in Korach’s rebellion,³⁰ when they sinned before God, for death by thirst is worse.**

4 **Why have you brought the congregation of God to this desert so that we and our livestock should die there?**

5 **Why have you taken us out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place; it is not a place that can be planted with seeds, or a place of fig trees, grapevines, or pomegranate trees, and there is no water to drink.”**

6 **Moses and Aaron moved away from the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and they fell on their faces and prayed to God to provide the people with water. The glory of God appeared to them as before, in the cloud.**

◆ *Third Reading (Second when combined)* **7** **God spoke to Moses, saying:**

8 **“Take your staff and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and speak in their presence to the rock that has provided you with water until now, so it will give forth its water in your merit. You shall bring forth water for them from the rock and give the congregation and their livestock to drink.”**

9 **Moses took the staff from before God, as He had commanded him.**

27. Below, on 20:26. 28. *Seder Olam Rabbah* 10. 29. Deuteronomy 33:8. 30. Above, 17:11-14.

10 וַיִּקְהֹלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַקָּהָל אֶל־פְּנֵי הַסֵּלַע וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לָהֶם שִׁמְעוּ־נָא הַמִּרְיִים הַמֶּן־הַסֵּלַע הַזֶּה נֹעֲזִיא לָכֶם מַיִם׃
11 וַיָּרֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַסֵּלַע בְּמַטְּהוֹ פַּעַמַּיִם
וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם רַבִּים וַתִּשְׁתַּהֲעַדָּה וּבָעִירָם׃ ס
12 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַל־אַהֲרֹן׃ יַעַן לֹא־הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם
בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָכֵן לֹא תָבִיאוּ אֶת־
הַקָּהָל הַזֶּה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לָהֶם׃ 13 הֲמָה מִי־
מְרִיבִים אֲשֶׁר־רָבוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְהוָה וַיִּקְדָּשׁ בָּם׃ ס

10 ואֶבְנִישׁוּ מִשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן יָתִ
קָהֵל לָקֵדָם בִּיפָא וְאָמַר לְהוֹן
שִׁמְעוּ כֵּן סִרְבְּנִי אִמְן בִּיפָא
הִזְיִן נֶפֶק לְכוֹן מִיָּא: 11 וְאָרַם
מִשֶּׁה יָת יִדָּה וּמָחָא יָת בִּיפָא
בְּחִטְרָה תִּרְמִין זְמִינִן וּנְפִקוּ מִיָּא
סְגִיָּא וְשִׁתִּיאַת בְּנִשְׁתָּא בְּרִיעִיהוֹן:
12 וְאָמַר יִי לְמִשְׁה לְאַהֲרֹן חֲלָף
דִּי לֹא הִימְנִתוֹן בְּמִימְרֵי לְקִדְוֹשִׁי
לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כֵּן לֹא תַעֲלֹן
יָת קָהֵל אֲהוּן לְאַרְעָא דִּי יְהִיבִתִּי
לְהוֹן: 13 אָרַם מִי מִצְוָתָא דִּי נָצוּ
בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כֻּסֵּם יִי וְאַתְקִדְשׁ בְּרִיעִיהוֹן

"הִצֵּאנוּ וּבִקְרִי יִשְׁחַט"¹² קָשָׁה מְזוּזָא אֵלָּא, לְפִי שְׂבֻסְתֵּךְ
 — חֹסֶף עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב, וְכֵן שְׂבֻמַּעְמַד כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל —
 לֹא חֹסֶף עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב, מִפְּנֵי קִדּוּשׁ הַשֵּׁם: **לְהַקְדִּישְׁנִי**.
 שְׂאֵלוֹ דְּבִרְתָּם אֵל הַסֵּלַע וְהוֹצִיא, הֵייתִי מִקְדָּשׁ לְעֵינֵי
 הַעֲדָה וְאוֹמְרִים: מַה סֵּלַע זֶה, שְׂאֵינוֹ מִדְּבַר וְאֵינוֹ שׁוֹמֵעַ
 וְאֵינוֹ צִרְיָה לְפָרְנֶסֶה, מִקֵּץ דְּבִירוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם, קֵל וְחֹמֶר
 אֵנוֹ: **לָכֵן לֹא תִבְיֹאוּ**. בְּשָׁבוּעָה, כְּמוֹ: "לָכֵן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי
 לְבֵית עַלְי"¹³. נִשְׁבַּע בְּקִפְצָה, שֶׁלֹּא יִרְבוּ בַתְּפִלָּה עַל
 כֶּף: **13 הַמָּה מִי מְרִיבָה**. הֵם הַנּוֹקְרִים בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר. אֵת
 יֵאלוּ רֵאוֹ אֶצְטַגְנִי פִּרְעָה, שְׂמוֹשִׁיעַן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹקָה
 בְּמִים, לִכְף גְּזוֹר: "כָּל הַבֵּן הַיּוֹדֵה הַאֲרֶה תִּשְׁלִיכֵהוּ"¹⁴:
וַיִּקְדֵּשׁ בָּם. שְׁמֵתוֹ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל יָדָם, שֶׁכִּשְׁהַקְדוּשׁ
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא עוֹשֶׂה דִין בְּמִקְדָּשָׁיו, הוּא יִרְאוּ וּמִתְקַדֵּשׁ עַל
 הַבְּרִיּוֹת. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "נִזְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִמִּקְדָּשֶׁיךָ"¹⁵,
 וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדֵּשׁ"¹⁶:

10 וַיִּקְהֲלוּ וְגו'. זה אָדָם מִן הַמְּקוֹמוֹת שֶׁהֵחִיק מֵעַט אֶת הַמֶּרְבֶּה: **הֵמָּן הַסֹּלֵעַ הָיָה נֹצִיָא.** לְפִי שֶׁלֹא הָיוּ מִכִּירִין אוֹתוֹ, לְפִי שֶׁהָלַךְ הַסֹּלֵעַ וַיָּשֶׁב לוֹ בֵּין הַסֹּלְעִים כְּשֶׁנִּסְתָּלַק הַבָּאָר, וְהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹמְרִים לָהֶם: "מִה לָכֶם, מֵאִיזָה סֹלֵעַ תֹּוצִיאוּ לָנוּ מִיָּם?" לָכֶן אָמַר לָהֶם: "הַמֹּרִים" — סֶרְבָנִים, לְשׁוֹן יוֹנִי: שׁוּטִים, מוֹרִים אֶת מוֹרֵיהֶם — "הֵמָּן הַסֹּלֵעַ הָיָה" שֶׁלֹא נִצְטְוּוּ עָלָיו 'נֹצִיָא לָכֶם מִיָּם!': **11 פַּעֲמֵים.** לְפִי שֶׁבָּרָאשׁוּנָה לֹא הוֹצִיָא אֶלָּא טַפִּין, לְפִי שֶׁלֹא צִוָּה הַמֶּקוֹם לְהַכּוֹתוֹ אֶלָּא "וַדְּבַרְתֶּם אֶל הַסֹּלֵעַ", וְהָמָּה דִּבְּרוּ אֶל סֹלֵעַ אַחֵר וְלֹא הוֹצִיָא, אָמְרוּ: "שָׁמָּה צָרִיךְ לְהַכּוֹתוֹ כְּבָרָאשׁוּנָה", שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְהַכִּיתָ בַּצּוּר", וְנִדְּמָן לָהֶם אוֹתוֹ סֹלֵעַ וְהִכּוּהוּ: **12 יַעַן לֹא הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי.** גִּלְהָה הַכְּתוּב, שֶׁאִלּוּלִי חָטָא זֶה בְּלִבְהּ, הָיוּ נִכְנָסִין לֶאֱרֶץ, כְּדִי שֶׁלֹא יֵאמְרוּ עֲלֵיהֶם: כַּעֲשׂוֹן שֶׁאֵר דּוֹר הַמִּדְבָּר, שֶׁנֶּגְדֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם שֶׁלֹא יִכְנְסוּ לֶאֱרֶץ, כִּי הָיָה עֲשׂוֹן מִשָּׁה וְאֶהְרֵן. וְהָלֹא

11. שמות יז, ו. 12. במדבר יא, כב. 13. שמואל"א ג, יד. 14. שמות א, כב. 15. תהלים סח, לו. 16. ויקרא י, ג.

Pharaoh's astrologers saw when they foresaw that the Israelites' redeemer would meet his end through water.⁴³ They became known as **"the waters of dispute"** [*Mei Merivah*] **because** God drew them from the rock after **the Israelites contended with Him. He was sanctified through** these waters, by punishing Moses and Aaron for disobeying His instructions regarding how to draw water from the rock. In contrast, Refidim, where the Jews had earlier complained about their lack of water,⁴⁴ was nicknamed *"Masah and Merivah"* ("Trial and Dispute"). God, at this point, also rescinded His promise to give the people the lands of the Ammonites,

12 To sanctify Me in the eyes of the Israelites: Herein lies the reason why Moses and Aaron were punished so severely. Jewish leaders must always take into account how the public will interpret their actions. Whatever rationalizations or long-term con-

siderations may justify their conduct to themselves, they must decide how to act based on whether the public will be inspired by their actions to greater devotion to the Torah and its ways—or not.⁴⁵

43. See on Exodus 1:22. 44. Exodus 17:7. 45. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 127-128.

10 Moses and Aaron miraculously **assembled the whole congregation** in the small area **in front of the rock**, but the rock from which water had flowed previously had rolled among the other rocks when it dried up, so Moses could not identify it. The people said to him, “What difference does it make from which rock you draw water for us?” Pointing to another rock at random, Moses **said angrily**³³ to them, “**Now listen, you foolish rebels**, are you telling Aaron and me what to do? Do you think **we can draw water for you from this rock**, about which God has not commanded us?”

11 To prove his point, Moses spoke to this other rock, and indeed, nothing happened. Moses and Aaron said, “Maybe we need to hit it, just as we were commanded to hit the original rock when it first gave water.”³⁴ **Moses raised his hand and**, by Divine providence, **struck the original rock with his staff**. He struck it **twice**, for since God had commanded him to *speak* to the rock, not hit it, the rock was not prepared for this type of overture, and it only gave forth a trickle the first time. He struck it a second time, **and then an abundance of water gushed forth, and the congregation and their livestock drank**. Thus, the well was restored to the people. It continued to provide them with water until Moses’ death.³⁵

12 God said to Moses and Aaron, “If you would have tried speaking to the rocks, trusting that I would lead you to the correct one, I would have led you to it. Then, the rock would have given water and the people would have learned to revere Me, thinking: ‘If this dumb, deaf, and self-sufficient rock obeys God’s will, all the more so should we, who can discern why we ought to obey His will and need His assistance.’ This would have prevented them from rebelling again.”³⁶ But **since you did not have enough faith in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Israelites**, I must teach them to revere Me by punishing *you* for not following My instructions. They will thus learn that rebelling against Me carries consequences. **Therefore**, I swear³⁷ that **you shall not bring this assembly to the land that I have given them**. True, I told you long ago that you would not lead the people into the land,³⁸ but you could have altered My decree through prayer. Now this is no longer possible.” Thus, were it not for this sin, Moses and Aaron would likely have been privileged to lead the people into the Land of Israel.³⁹ God promised Moses that whenever the Torah mentions his and Aaron’s death, it will note that they were forbidden to enter the Land of Israel because of this sin, so that it not be thought that they were among those who sinned with the spies.⁴⁰ Although Moses had committed a graver sin by doubting God’s power at Kivrot HaTa’avah,⁴¹ he committed that sin in private, and therefore did not serve as a bad example for the people. Here, by hitting the rock, he did not follow God’s instructions in public.

13 These waters, which led to Moses’ death in the wilderness, **are the waters that**

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

8 Take your staff: When God restored the well that had existed in Miriam’s merit, He did so through Moses, for the leaders of the Jewish people are re-

sponsible not only for guiding them spiritually and leading them politically but for providing for their physical needs as well.⁴²

33. Rashi on 31:21, below. 34. Exodus 17:6. 35. Rashi on 21:20, below. 36. Rashi here and on Deuteronomy 32:51. 37. Deuteronomy 4:21. 38. Exodus 6:1. 39. Rashi on 27:13, below. 40. Ibid. 41. Above, 11:22. 42. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 260.

— ONKELOS —

14 ושלח משה אנגדין מרקם לות מלכא דאדום כדנן אמר אחור ישראל את ידעת ית כל עקתא די אשכחנתא: 15 ונחתו אבהתנא למצרים ותיבנא במצרים ימין סגיאין ואבאישו לנא מצראי ולאבהתנא: 16 וצלינא קדם יי וקבל צלותנא ושלח מלכא ואפקנא ממצרים והא אנחנא ברקם קרתא דבסטר תחומי: 17 נעבר כען בארעך לא נעבר בחקל ובכרם ולא נשתי מי גוב בארד מלכא נול לא נסטי למינא ולשמאלא עד דנעבר תחומי: 18 ואמר לה אדומא לא תעבר בתחומי דלמא בדקטלין בהרבא אפוק לקדמותך:

— RASHI —

אין לה לעזר על הירשה של ארץ ישראל, כשם שלא פרעת החוב, עשה לנו עזר מעט לעבר דרך ארצה: **ולא נשתה מי באר**. "מי בורות" היה צריך לומר, אלא כף אמר משה: "אף על פי שיש בידנו מן לאכל ובאר לשותות, לא נשתה ממנה, אלא נקנה מכם אכל ומים להנאתכם". מכאן לאכסנא, שאף על פי שיש בידו לאכל, יקנה מן החנוני, כדי להנות את אשפיו: **דרך המלך נלך וגו'**. אנו חוסמים את בהמתנו, ולא יטו לכאן ולכאן לאכל: 18 **פן בהרב אצא לקראתך**. אתם מתגאים בקול שהורישכם אביכם ואומרים: "ונצעק אל ה' וישמע קלנו"²¹, ואני אצא עליכם במה שהורישני אבי: "ועל חרבך תחיה"²².

17. בראשית טו, יג. 18. בראשית לו, ו. 19. בראשית כז, כב. 20. דב"ב לו, טו. 21. פסוק טו. 22. בראשית כז, מ.

◆ רביעי 14 וישלח משה מלכאבים מקדש אל-מלך אדום כה אמר אחיך ישראל אתה ידעת את כל-התלאה אשר מצאתנו: 15 וירדו אבותינו מצרימה ונשב במצרים ימים רבים וירעו לנו מצרים ולאבותינו: 16 ונצעק אל-יהוה וישמע קלנו וישלח מלך ויצאנו ממצרים והנה אנחנו בקדש עיר קצה גבולך: 17 נעברהנא בארצך לא נעבר בשדה ובכרם ולא נשתה מי באר הדרך המלך נלך לא נטה ימין ושמאל עד אשר-נעבר גבולך: 18 ויאמר אליו אדום לא תעבר בי פן-בהרב אצא לקר

14 אחיך ישראל. מה ראה להזכיר כאן אחיה? אלא אמר לו: "אחים אנחנו, בני אברהם, שנאמר לו: 'כי גר יהיה ורעך', ועל שנינו היה אותו החוב לפרעו": **אתה ידעת את כל התלאה**. לפיכך פרש אביכם מעל אבינו, שנאמר: "וילך אל ארץ מפני יעקב אחיו"¹⁸, מפני השטר חוב המטל עליהם, והטילו על יעקב: 15 **וירעו לנו**. סבלנו צרות רבות: **ולאבותינו**. מכאן שהאבות מצטערים בקבר, כשפרענות באה על ישראל: 16 **וישמע קלנו**. בברכה שברכנו אבינו: "הקל קול יעקב"¹⁹, שאנו צועקים ונענים: **מלך**. זה משה, מכאן שהנביאים קרואים "מלכאים", ואומר: "ויהיו מלעבים במלכאי האלהים"²⁰: 17 **נעברהנא בארצך**.

Israel, and you owe us a favor for having fulfilled your obligation to suffer exile, **please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water** from the well that accompanies us on our travels and is our constant source of water. Instead, we will buy food and drink from you like good guests, so you can benefit financially from our passage. **We will walk along the main highway, the king's road, and we will muzzle our animals, allowing them to turn neither to the right nor to the left to graze in your fields until we have passed through your territory."**

18 The king of Edom replied to him, "You shall not pass through my country, lest I go out to greet you with the sword! Just as you pride yourself on the blessing Isaac gave to your ancestor Jacob, I pride myself on the blessing he gave to my ancestor, Esau: to live by the sword."⁵⁴

54. Ibid. 27:40.

Moabites, and Edomites immediately when they would enter the land,⁴⁶ reverting to His original plan to postpone the conquest of these lands until the messianic future.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, as will be explained further on,⁴⁸ He did want them to give them those portions of Ammon and Moab that had been conquered by the Amorites, so He told Moses to lead the people toward entering the land from the east, rather than from the south.

Confronting Edom

- ◆ **Fourth Reading 14** The incident of the water behind them, the Israelites could resume their journey toward the Land of Israel. Since they were at the border of Edom and were no longer allowed to try to conquer it,⁴⁹ they would have to either travel around it or negotiate passage through it (see Figure 2). **Moses** decided to first try the more direct option, and therefore **sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom**. He sent these messengers in his own name in order to frighten the Edomites into compliance, since by this time he was known worldwide as God's personal emissary.⁵⁰ He told the messengers to say, "**So say the descendants of Israel, i.e., Jacob, your ancestor Esau's brother:** As Jacob's brother, Esau should have shared the responsibility of fulfilling God's decree that Abraham's descendants live as foreigners in exile as a condition to inherit the Land of Israel."⁵¹ But

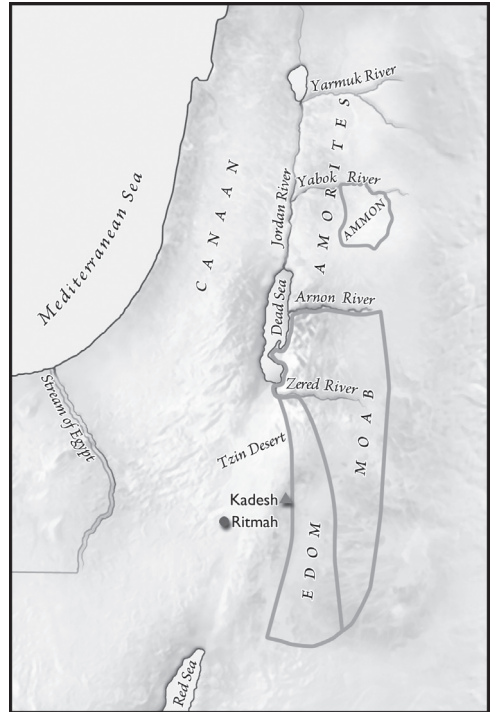


Figure 2: Kadesh

he chose instead to make his home in a different land, in order to be free of this obligation.⁵² It therefore fell to us alone to fulfill the condition. **You know of all the hardship that has befallen us** on this account:

15 Our fathers went down to Egypt, and we sojourned in Egypt for a long time. And the Egyptians mistreated us and our forefathers as well, for the patriarchs suffer in the grave when their descendants suffer.

16 We cried out to God, because Isaac blessed our ancestor Jacob that his descendants' prayers be answered,⁵³ **and He heard our voice**. God **sent an emissary, Moses, and he took us** miraculously **out of Egypt**. As you see, God answered our prayers, so you would be ill advised to try to do us evil. **Now we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border**.

17 Since you cannot possibly object to our plan to take possession of the Land of

46. Exodus 23:31. 47. Exodus 3:8; Genesis 15:21; Isaiah 11:14. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 2, pp. 1258-1259, 1267-1269. 48. Below, 32:2. 49. Deuteronomy 2:4-6. 50. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 145. 51. Genesis 15:7-13. 52. Ibid. 36:6. 53. Ibid. 27:22.

ONKELOS

19 ואמרו לה בני ישראל בארץ
בביתא נסק ואם מיין נשתי
אנא ובעירי ואיהב דמיהון לחד
לית פתגם דביש ברגלי אעבר:
20 ואמר לא תעבר ונפק אדומאה
לקדמותה בחיל רב ובידא תקיפא:
21 וסריב אדומאה למשבק ית
ישראל למעבר בתחומה וטסא
ישראל מלנתה: 22 ונטלו מרקם
ואתו בני ישראל כל בנשחא לחר
טורא: 23 ואמר יי למשה ולאהרן
בהר טורא על תחום ארעא
דאדום למימר: 24 יתבנש אהרן
לעמא ארי לא יעול לארעא די
יהבית לבני ישראל על די סרבנות
על מימרי למי מצותא: 25 דבר ית
אהרן וית אלעזר ברה ואסק יתהון
להר טורא: 26 ואשלח ית אהרן
ית לבושהי ותלבשנון ית אלעזר
ברה ואהרן יתבנש וימות תמן:

ראתך: 19 ויאמרו אליו בני ישראל במסלה נעלה ואם-
מימיה נשתה אני ומקני ונתתי מכרם רק אין דבר בר-
גלי אעברה: 20 ויאמר לא תעבר ויצא אדום לקראתו
בעם פבר וביד חזקה: 21 ומאן אדום נתן את ישראל
עבר בגבלו ויט ישראל מעליו: פ

◆ חמישי (שלישי במחזורין) 22 ויסעו מקדש ויבאו בני-
ישראל כל העדה הר ההר: 23 ויאמר יהוה אל משה
ואל אהרן בהר ההר על גבול ארץ אדום לאמר:
24 יאסף אהרן אל עמיו כי לא יבא אל הארץ אשר
נתתי לבני ישראל על אשר מריתם את פי למי מרי-
בה: 25 קח את אהרן ואת אלעזר בנו והעל אתם הר
ההר: 26 והפשט את אהרן את בגדיו והלבשתם את-
אלעזר בנו ואהרן יאסף ומת שם:

RASHI

אומר ליהושפט²⁵: "בהתחברך עם אחיזהו, פרץ ה' את
מעשיך": 25 קח את אהרן. בדברי נחומים, אמר לו:
"אשריך שתראה בתוך נתון לבנה, מה שאין אני וזאי
לכך": 26 את בגדיו. את בגדי כהונה גדולה הלבשהו,
והפשיטם מעליו לתתם על בנו בפניו, אמר לו: "הכנס
למערך!" ונכנס. ראה משה מצעת וגר דלוק, אמר לו:
"עלה למטה!" ועלה. "פשט ידיך!" ופשט. "קמץ פיך!"
וקמץ. "עצם עיניך!" ועצם. מיד חמד משה לאותה
מיתה, וזהו שנאמר לו: "כאשר מת אהרן אחיך"²⁶ —
מיתה שנתאווית לה:

19 רק אין דבר. אין שום דבר מזה: 20 וביד חזקה.
בהבטחת וקננו: "והידיים ידי עשו"²³: 22 כל העדה. כלם
שלמים ועומדים להכנס לארץ, שלא היה בהן אחד
מאותם שנגזרה גזרה עליהם, שכבר כלו מתי מדבר,
ואלו מאותן שכתוב בהן²⁴: "חיים כלכם היום": הר ההר.
הר על גבי הר, כתפוח קטן על גבי תפוח גדול. ואף על
פי שהענן הולך לפניהם ומשנה את ההרים, שלשה
נשארו בהן: הר סיני — לתורה, והר נבו — לקבורת
משה. והר ההר — לקבורת אהרן: 23 על גבול ארץ
אדום. מגיד, שמפני שנתחברו כאן להתקרב לעשו
הרשע, נפרצו מעשיהם וחסרו הצדיק הזה, וכן הנביא

23. בראשית כז, כב. 24. דברים יד, ד. 25. דב"ב כ, לו. 26. דברים לב, נ.

and Eleazar—into a cave in Mount Hor.

26 There will be a bed with a lit candle next to it in this cave. When you enter, clothe Aaron in the garments of the high priesthood, **strip Aaron of these garments, and dress his son Eleazar in them.** By this, Aaron will see the office of high priest transferred to his son. Then tell Aaron to get into the bed, stretch out his hands and feet,⁶⁵ and close his mouth and eyes. **Then Aaron shall be gathered in to his ancestors and die there.**" This type of serene death is known as death "by God's kiss."

65. Rashi on Deuteronomy 32:50.

19 Thinking that the reason the Edomites refused them was because Moses sent them emissaries in his own name and the Edomites did not feel that Moses could assume responsibility for the entire people's actions, **the Israelites** sent additional emissaries to the king of Edom.⁵⁵ They **said to him, "We will keep to the highway, and if either we or our cattle drink your water, we will pay its price. There is really nothing to fear; we will pass through on foot."**

20 **But the king of Edom said, "You shall not pass through!" and Edom came out to greet them with a vast force,** relying on the **strong hand** Isaac recognized as Esau's advantage.⁵⁶

21 Thus **Edom refused to allow Israel to cross through its territory,** although they did sell the Israelites food.⁵⁷ **So,** since God had instructed Moses not to wage war against them, **Israel turned away from them.** An alternative route northward was through Moab. Moses asked the Moabites permission to pass through their land, but they also denied them passage,⁵⁸ although they, too, did sell the Israelites food.⁵⁹ God told Moses that since this territory was also not part of the land He intended to give them, they must not try to conquer it either,⁶⁰ although He did potentially allow them to frighten, raid, and plunder them,⁶¹ because they emulated their ancestress' immorality.⁶² So, after spending three and a half months at Kadesh, they headed southward, away from the Land of Israel, along the western border of Edom.

Aaron's Death

◆ Fifth Reading (Third when combined)

22 They traveled from Kadesh, and the entire congregation of the Israelites that was destined to enter the Land of Israel arrived at Mount Hor ["The Mountain of the Mountain"], so named because it was a small summit atop a larger one, on the 1st of Av, 2487 (See Figure 3).⁶³

23 **God said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the southern border of Edom, saying,**

24 "You erred by trying to pass through Edom. You should have realized that traveling through its land would expose the people to the unhealthy influence of the Edomites' depraved culture. To atone for this error, **Aaron shall now die and be gathered to his people's ancestors.** He would have had to die soon at any rate, **for he will not enter the land that I have given to the Israelites** and that they are soon to enter, **because you both defied My word at Kadesh, in the incident of 'the waters of dispute.'**"⁶⁴

25 Moses, **console Aaron** by pointing out that he will die seeing **his son Eleazar** inherit his office, whereas your son will not inherit yours. **Bring them up—** Aaron



Figure 3: From Kadesh to Mount Hor

55. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 145, note 20. 56. Genesis 27:22. 57. Rashi on Deuteronomy 2:29. 58. Judges 11:17, alluded to in Deuteronomy 2:29. 59. Rashi on Deuteronomy 2:29. 60. Deuteronomy 2:9. 61. Rashi ad loc. 62. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 5. 63. Below, 33:38. 64. Above, vv. 12-13.

ONKELOS

27 וַיַּעֲבֹד מֹשֶׁה כְּמֹא דִּי פְקִיד
 וְסִלְקוּ לְהָר טוֹרָא לְעֵינֵי כָל
 כְּנִשְׁתָּא: 28 וַאֲשַׁלַּח מֹשֶׁה יָת
 אֶהְרֹן יָת לְבוּשׁוֹהִי וְאֶלְבָּשׁ יִתְהוֹן
 יָת אֶלְעָזָר בְּרָכָה וּמִית אֶהְרֹן תִּמְן
 בְּרִישׁ טוֹרָא וְנַחַת מֹשֶׁה וְאֶלְעָזָר
 מִן טוֹרָא: 29 וְחֻזּוּ כָל כְּנִשְׁתָּא אֲרִי
 מִית אֶהְרֹן וּבְכוּ יָת אֶהְרֹן תִּלְתִּין
 יוֹמִין כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל: 21:1 וְשָׁמַע
 כְּנַעֲנָה מִלְּפָא דְעֶרֶד יָתְב דְּרוֹמָא
 אֲרִי אֶתָּא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲרַח מֵאֶלְלִיא
 וְאִגַּח קֶרְבָּא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּשְׂבָא מִנָּה
 שְׂבִיא:

27 וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶל־הָר הַהוּא לְעֵינֵי
 כָּל־הָעֵדָה: 28 וַיַּפְשֵׁט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־אֶהְרֹן אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ
 אֹתָם אֶת־אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־זִכְרִיָּה וַיָּמָת אֶהְרֹן שָׁם בְּרֹאשׁ הָהָר וַיִּרֶד
 מֹשֶׁה וְאֶלְעָזָר מִן־הָהָר: 29 וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל־הָעֵדָה כִּי גֹעַ אֶהְרֹן
 וַיָּבֹכוּ אֶת־אֶהְרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס
 21:1 וַיִּשְׁמַע הַכְּנַעֲנִי מִלֶּדְעֶרֶד יֹשֵׁב הַנֶּגֶב כִּי בָא יִשְׂרָאֵל
 דֶּרֶךְ הָאֲתָרִים וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשָּׁב | מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂבִי:

RASHI

שהוא מגזרת שמוש "אי", שמצינו "אם" משמש בלשון
 "אֶשֶׁר", כמו²⁸: "וְאִם מִדּוּעַ לֹא תִקְצַר רוּחִי", וְהִרְבֵּה
 מִפְּרָשִׁים כִּנּוּי הַלְשׁוֹן²⁹: "אִם חֲרוּצִים וְיָמִין: 1 וַיִּשְׁמַע
 הַכְּנַעֲנִי. שָׁמַע שְׁמַת אֶהְרֹן וְנִסְתַּלְקוּ עֲנָנֵי כְבוֹד וְכו',
 כְּדִאיָתָא בְּרֹאשׁ הַשְּׁנֵה³⁰. וְעַמְלָק — מַעוֹלָם רְצוּעַת
 מִרְדּוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, מִזְמָן כָּכָל עַת לְפָרְעֻנוּת: יֹשֵׁב הַנֶּגֶב.
 זֶה עַמְלָק, שְׁנֵאֲמָר³¹: "עַמְלָק יֹשֵׁב בְּאַרְץ הַנֶּגֶב". וְשָׁנָה
 אֶת לְשׁוֹנוֹ לְדַבֵּר בְּלִשׁוֹן כְּנַעֲנִי, כְּדִי שִׁיְהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 מִתְּפַלְלִים לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְתַת כְּנַעֲנִים בִּידָם, וְהֵם
 אֵינָן כְּנַעֲנִים. רָאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבוּשֵׁיהֶם כְּלְבוּשֵׁי עַמְלָקִים
 וּלְשׁוֹנָם לְשׁוֹן כְּנַעֲנִי, אָמְרוּ: נִתְפַּלֵּל כְּתָם, שְׁנֵאֲמָר: "אִם
 נָתַן תַּתָּן אֶת הָעַם הַזֶּה בְּיָדִי: דֶּרֶךְ הָאֲתָרִים. דֶּרֶךְ
 הַנֶּגֶב שֶׁהֵלְכוּ בָּהּ הַמִּרְגָּלִים, שְׁנֵאֲמָר³²: "וַיַּעֲלוּ כְּנַעֲנִי."
 דָּבָר אַחֵר: "דֶּרֶךְ הָאֲתָרִים", דֶּרֶךְ הַתִּיר הַגָּדוֹל, הַנוֹסֵעַ
 לְפָנֵיהֶם, שְׁנֵאֲמָר³³: "דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לְתוֹר לָהֶם
 מִנוֹחָה": וַיִּשָּׁב מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂבִי. אֵינָה אֶלָּא שְׂפָחָה אֶחָת:

27 וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה. אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהִדְבֵּר קֶשֶׁה לוֹ, לֹא עָכָב:
 29 וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל הָעֵדָה וגו'. כִּשְׂרָאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאֶלְעָזָר יוֹרְדִים
 וְאֶהְרֹן לֹא יֵרֵד, אָמְרוּ: "הֵיכָן הוּא אֶהְרֹן?" אָמַר לָהֶם:
 "מָת". אָמְרוּ: "אִפְשָׁר מִי שֶׁעֲמַד כְּנֶגֶד הַמִּלְאָךְ וְעֶצֶר
 אֶת הַמִּגְפָּה וְשִׁלְט בּוֹ מִלְאָךְ הַמָּוֶת?" מִיד בְּקֶשׁ מֹשֶׁה
 רַחֲמִים, וְהִרְאֹהוּ מִלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לָהֶם מוֹטֵל בַּמִּשְׁה,
 רָאוּ — וְהִאֲמִינוּ: כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים,
 לְפִי שֶׁהָיָה אֶהְרֹן רוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, וּמִטִּיל אֶהְרָה בֵּין בְּעָלֵי
 מְרִיבָה וּבֵין אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ: כִּי גֹעַ. אוֹמֵר אֲנִי שֶׁהִמְתַּרְגֵּם
 "דִּקָּה מִית", טוֹעָה הוּא, אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן מִתְּרַגֵּם "וַיִּרְאוּ" —
 "וְאֶתְחַוִּיאוּ", שְׁלֹא אָמְרוּ רְבוּתֵינוּ וְכִרּוֹנָם לְבָרְכָה: "כִּי"
 זֶה מִשְׁמַשׁ בְּלִשׁוֹן "דִּקָּה", אֶלָּא עַל מִדְרָשׁ שֶׁנִּסְתַּלְקוּ
 עֲנָנֵי כְבוֹד, וְכִדְאָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ²⁷: אֵל תִּקְרִי "וַיִּרְאוּ"
 אֶלָּא "וַיִּרְאוּ", וְעַל לְשׁוֹן זֶה נּוֹפֵל לְשׁוֹן "דִּקָּה", לְפִי
 שֶׁהוּא נְתִינַת טַעַם לְמָה שֶׁלְּמַעֲלָה הֵימְנוּ — לְמָה
 וַיִּרְאוּ? לְפִי שֶׁהָיָה מֵת אֶהְרֹן. אֶבֶל עַל תִּרְגוּם "וְחֻזּוּ כָל
 כְּנִשְׁתָּא", אֵין לְשׁוֹן "דִּקָּה" נּוֹפֵל, אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן "אֶשֶׁר",

27. ראש השנה ג, א. 28. איוב כא, ד. 29. איוב יד, ה. 30. ג, א. 31. במדבר יג, כט. 32. במדבר י, לג. 33. שם.

from the wrong enemies. Thus the king of Amalek **waged war against Israel and indeed took a captive from them**, although this was only a woman the Israelites had captured from Amalek in their earlier encounter with them⁷⁸ and who thus had the status of a slave⁷⁹ and was therefore outside the protective clouds.⁸⁰

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

1 The "Clouds of Glory" ...existed in his merit: We are taught that Aaron loved all Jews equally, solicited their well-being, patiently taught them the Torah, and diplomatically quieted arguments between people and even between spouses.⁸¹ Therefore, the Clouds of Glory, which surrounded all the Jewish people equally, existed in his merit.⁸²

The king of Amalek waged war against Israel and took a captive from them: Amalek attacked the Israelites when they first left Egypt and were on their

way to receive the Torah, and here again as they were preparing to enter the Land of Israel. In the first skirmish, they did not disguise themselves, but here they did.

Allegorically, Amalek is the element of doubt that cools the enthusiasm we are supposed to feel toward God and our Divine mission. In this sense, our inner Amalek does not oppose receiving the Torah, only our excitement about it. After all, he argues, learning the Torah is an intellectual endeavor.

78. Exodus 17:8-16. 79. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, p. 237. 80. Likutei Sichot, vol. 18, p. 259, note 58. See on Exodus 13:21. 81. Avot 1:12; Avot deRabbi Natan 12:3. 82. Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, p. 335; Sefer HaSichot 5751, vol. 2, pp. 714-715.

27 Although it was hard for him, **Moses did exactly as God had commanded him. They ascended Mount Hor in the presence of the entire congregation.**

28 Inside the cave, **Moses** dressed Aaron in the garments of the high priesthood, **stripped Aaron of these garments, and dressed his son Eleazar in them**, and then had Aaron get into the bed, stretch out his hands and feet, and close his mouth and eyes. Thus **Aaron died there on the top of the mountain.** When Moses saw how Aaron died, he hoped he would also die the same gradual and serene way.⁶⁶ Then **Moses and Eleazar descended from the mountain.**

29 **The whole congregation saw that Aaron had perished** from the fact that Moses and Eleazar returned alone. But they could not believe that the man who had stopped the Angel of Death in Korach's rebellion⁶⁷ could himself die, so Moses prayed for God to convince them. God showed them an image of Aaron lying on the bed in the cave, and then they believed. After Aaron died, they fought off an attack by the Amalekites and retreated as far as Moserot, one of their previous stops, for reasons the Torah will relate presently. While at Moserot, **the entire house of Israel**, men and women, **wept for Aaron for 30 days**,⁶⁸ for he had made a point of making peace between people, particularly between spouses.

Amalek's Second Attack

21:1 The Torah now continues to relate what happened while the Israelites were still at Mount Hor. Besides depriving them of Aaron, God punished the people further by emboldening Amalek to attack them yet again.⁶⁹ As we have seen,⁷⁰ the clouds that surrounded the Israelites on their journeys protected them from the elements and from attack, led them through the desert, and served as an "honor guard." When Aaron died, the clouds that served the latter purpose (the "Clouds of Glory") disappeared—for they existed solely in his merit—leaving only the protective and leading clouds. Whereas God restored the well that had existed in Miriam's merit after her death, He did not restore the Clouds of Glory after Aaron's death; nor did the people complain about their absence, as they had complained about the lack of water when the well disappeared. This is because the Clouds of Glory were not vital to the people's existence as was the water that the well provided.⁷¹

The Amalekite king of Arad (who, as we shall see presently, disguised his people as **Canaanites**), **who lived in the southern** part of the Land of Israel,⁷² **heard** that the Clouds of Glory had disappeared. The Amalekites had attacked the Jews at Refidim,⁷³ and had wanted to attack **Israel** again when it **had come** close to Amalekite territory and tried to enter the Land of Israel through Edom **by the route the spies** had taken,⁷⁴ and even prior to this when they saw the Ark of the Covenant—which preceded the Israelites by a three-day journey's distance⁷⁵—but they were deterred by the presence of the Clouds of Glory.⁷⁶ Now, however, they interpreted the removal of God's "honor guard" to mean that He now permitted other nations to attack.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, they knew the Israelites still possessed their power of prayer, so, in order to render their prayers ineffectual, the Amalekites disguised themselves as Canaanites, hoping the Israelites would pray to God to deliver them

66. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 58, note 37. 67. Above, 17:11-15. 68. Rashi on Deuteronomy 10:7. 69. See Exodus 17:8-16. 70. On Exodus 13:21. 71. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 253, 260. 72. Above, 13:29. 73. Exodus 17:8 ff. 74. Above, 13:22. 75. Above, 10:33. 76. Based on *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 78 ff. 77. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 253-258.

ONKELOS

2 וְקִים יִשְׂרָאֵל קִים קָדִים יְיָ וְאָמַר
אִם מִמָּסַר תִּמְסַר יֵת עֲמָא דְדִין
בִּידֵי וְאָגְמַר יֵת קְרִינְהוּן: 3 וְקָבַל יְיָ
צְלוּתָהּ דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמָסַר יֵת בְּנִגְנָאָה
וְגַמַּר יֵתְהוּן וְיֵת קְרִינְהוּן וְקָרָא
שְׁמָא דְאַתְרָא חֲרָמָה: 4 וְנָטְלוּ
מִהַר טוֹכָא אֲרַח יִמָּא דְסוּף
לְאָקְפָא יֵת אֲרַעָא דְאָדוּם וְעָתָה
נִפְשָׁא דְעֲמָא בְּאַרְחָא:

2 וַיִּדְרֹךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל גִּדְרֹךְ לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נִתֵּן תִּתֵּן אֶת־הָעַם
הַזֶּה בְּיָדִי וְהַחֲרַמְתִּי אֶת־עֲרֵיהֶם: 3 וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וַיַּחֲרֶם אֹתָהֶם וְאֶת־עֲרֵיהֶם
וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם חֲרָמָה: פ
4 וַיִּסְעוּ מִהַר הָהָר דֶּרֶךְ יַם־סוּף לְסַבֵּב אֶת־אֶרֶץ אֲדוּם
וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשֵׁי־הָעָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ:

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ושמונה שנה עד היום, לפיכך קצרה נפשם בענוי הדֶּרֶךְ.
ובלשון לעז אינקרוט לר"ם: 36. ולא יתכן לומר "ותקצר
נפש העם בדרך" — בהיותם בדרך — ולא פרש בו במה
קצרה, שכל מקום שתמצא קצור נפש במקרא, מפרש
שם במה קצרה, כגון: 37. "ותקצר נפשי בהם", וכגון: 38.
"ותקצר נפשו בעמל ישראל", וכל דבר הקשה על אדם
נופל בו לשון "קצור נפש", כאדם שהטרח בא עליו
ואין דעתו רחבה לקבל אותו הדבר ואין לו מקום בתוך
לבו לגור שם אותו הצער. ובדבר המטריח נופל לשון
"גדל", שגדול הוא וכבד על האדם, כגון: 39. "וגם נפשים
בחלה ב" — גדלה עלי, ויגאה בשחל תצודני". 40. כללו
של פרוש: כל לשון קצור נפש בדרך — לשון שאין
יכול לסבלו הוא, שאין הדעת סובלתו:

2 והחרמתי. אקדיש שללם לגבוה: 3 ויחרם אותם.
בהריגה: ואת עריהם. חרמי גבוה: 4 דרך ים סוף. כיון
שמת אהרן ובאת עליהם מלחמה זו, חזרו לאחוריהם
דרך ים סוף, הוא הדרך שחזרו להם כשנגזר עליהם
גזרת מרגלים, שנאמר: 41. "וסעו המדברה דרך ים
סוף". וכאן חזרו לאחוריהם שבע מסעות, שנאמר: 42.
"ובני ישראל נסעו מבארית בני יעקן מוסרה, שם מת
אהרן". וכי במוסרה מת, והלא בהר ההר מת? אלא,
שם חזרו והתאבלו עליו והספידוהו כאלו הוא בפניהם.
וצא ובדק במסעות, ותמצאם שבע מסעות מן מוסרה
עד הר ההר: לסבב את ארץ אדום. שלא נתנם לעבר
בארצו: ותקצר נפש העם בדרך. בטרם הדרך שהקשה
להם, אמרו: עכשו היינו קרובים להכנס לארץ ואנו
חוזרים לאחורינו, כך חזרו אבותינו ונשתהו שלשים

34. דברים א, מ. 35. שם י, ו. 36. נמאס להם. 37. זכריה יא, ח. 38. שופטים י, טו. 39. זכריה יא, ח. 40. איוב י, טו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

In fact, however, the Amalekite attitude will eventually lead us off the Torah's path. Unless we approach the Torah with the warmth and enthusiasm that flow naturally from relating to it as God's will and wisdom, we will lose interest in it and squander our energies on diversions and lifestyles that offer more immediate gratification, whether material or spiritual.

If the inner Amalek fails to cool us off, he will disguise himself as a Canaanite, an inhabitant of the land of material life we enter after our daily prayers and studies. He will then argue, "I have no quarrel with your acting holy and Godly while you pray and study the Torah. But when you set about to earn your living and deal with the physical world, you have to forget all of that and live by *my* rules. You cannot expect to succeed in the real world if you refuse to work on the Sabbath and festivals, if you donate any significant amount of your hard-earned money to charity, if you insist on providing your children with the best Jewish education, and so on. You must focus on material success, not on elevating material reality and raising Divine consciousness wherever you go and whatever you do."

The inner Amalek behaves the way Amalek behaved

in this historical episode: "he took a captive from them," someone the Israelites had originally captured from the Amalekites. "The material world," Amalek maintains, "belongs to me. *You* are the one who—by transforming the material into the spiritual—is stealing from me what is rightfully mine."

Just as Amalek attacked us at the beginning and end of our trek in the desert, we engage him in the beginning and end of our post-desert history. God commanded King Saul, the first king of Israel, to wipe out Amalek. Because Saul did not follow God's instructions fully, a later descendant of Amalek, Haman, almost wiped out the Jews completely. Now, as we stand at the end of our post-desert history, on the eve of our final entry into the Land of Israel, we must face Amalek once again.

As before, Amalek disguises himself as the sophisticated businessman, making light of our commitment to God's Torah. Once again, he argues, "Forget what the Torah has to say about business ethics, honesty, morality, and responsibility. Forget that God is guiding your steps and that you need His help to succeed. No one believes that, much less acts on it. Your job is to make money, and in the dog-eat-dog world of workaday reality, you have to

2 **Israel** saw that these enemies who were disguised as Canaanites had Amalekite features, so they **made a generic vow to God, and said, "If You deliver this people into my hand, whoever they are, I shall dedicate the spoils of their cities to You."**

3 **God** heard Israel's voice and delivered the "**Canaanite**" into their hands. The Israelites **destroyed** all of **them**, for there was no way to dedicate captives, **and dedicated** the spoils of **their cities** to God, **and they called the place Chormah** ["Dedication/Destruction"] (See Figure 4).⁸³

The Snakes

4 Aaron's death and this battle with Amalek disheartened the people so much that they decided to return to Egypt. **They journeyed from Mount Hor** back the way they had come, **by way of the Sea of Reeds**. The tribe of Levi opposed this retreat and pursued the rest of the people, catching up with them seven stops back from Mount Hor, at Moserot. The Levites battled them in an effort to stop the retreat, and a sizeable number of Israelites—laymen and Levites—perished⁸⁴ before the decision was made to halt the retreat and continue in the direction of the Land of Israel (See Figure 5). The people then spent a month at Moserot, mourning the death of Aaron. They then retraced their steps from Moserot to Mount Hor, after which they resumed their journey toward the Land of Israel, and continued southward through the Aravah valley⁸⁵ in order **to circle Edom**, stopping at Tzalmonah and Punon (See Figure 6).⁸⁶ While at Punon,⁸⁷ **the people became disheartened because of the setbacks on their journey**.

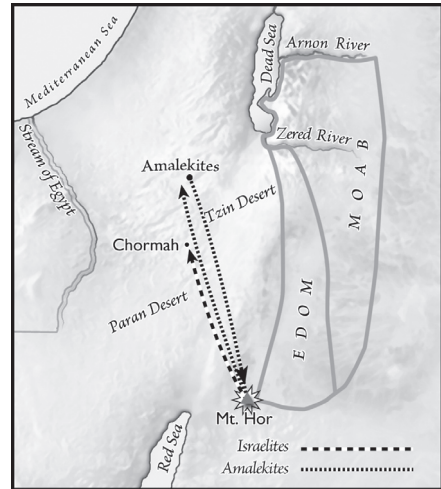


Figure 4: Amalek's Second Attack



Figure 5: The Retreat



Figure 6: From Mount Hor to Punon

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Reason requires a calm, seasoned attitude, not fiery enthusiasm. In particular, he argues against our passionate commitment to God's laws even before we have learned what they are.⁸⁸ "If the Torah is

true," he contends, "we will eventually commit to it even if we predicate action on study. Why be so impetuous and irrational?"

[continues....]

83. Cf. above, 14:45. 84. Below, on 26:13, 39, 45, 58. 85. Deuteronomy 2:8. 86. Numbers 33:41-42. 87. Targum Yonatan to Numbers 33:42. 88. See on Exodus 25:7.

ONKELOS

5 וְאַתְרַעַם עִמָּא בְּמִימְרָא דִּי וָעַם
לְמִשָּׁה נָצוּ לְמָא אֶסְקִתּוּנָא מִמְצָרִים
לְמַמַּת בְּמִדְבָּרָא אָרִי לִית לְחִמָּא
וְלִית מִיָּא וְנִפְשָׁנָא עֲקַת בְּמָנָא
הָדִין דְּמִיכְלָה קָלִיל: 6 וְגָרִי יִי
בְּעִמָּא יִת חֲוִין קָלָן וְנִכְיִתָּה יִת עִמָּא
וּמִית עִם סָגִי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: 7 וְאַתָּא
עִמָּא לְמִשָּׁה וְאַמְרוּ חֲבָנָא אָרִי
אַתְרַעַמְנָא קָדָם יִי וְעַמְךָ נִצְיָנָא
צִלִּי קָדָם יִי וְיַעֲדִי מִנְּנָא יִת חֲוִיָּא
רְצִלִּי מִשָּׁה עַל עִמָּא: 8 וְאַמְרִי יִי
לְמִשָּׁה עֲבַד לָךְ קָלִיא וְשׁוּי יִתָּה
עַל אֶת יוֹהֵי כָל דִּיתְנִבִּית וְיַחְזִי
יִתָּה וְיִתְקַם:

5 וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בָּאלֹהִים וּבְמֹשֶׁה לֵּמָּה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם
לְמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לָחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלָּחֶם
הַקָּלֶקֶל: 6 וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בָּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים וַיִּנֶּה-
שָׁבוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִסְרָב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: 7 וַיִּבֹּא הָעָם אֶל־
מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ חֲטֵאָנוּ כִּי־דַבַּרְנוּ בַּיהוָה וְכֵן הִתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־
יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר מַעֲלָנוּ אֶת־הַנְּחָשׁ וַיִּתְּפַלֵּל מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד הָעָם:
8 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־
נֹס וְהָיָה כָּל־הַנִּשּׁוּף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וַחֲיָי:

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"וְכִנֵּס עַל הַגִּבְעָה"⁴², "אָרִים נִסֵּר"⁴³, "שָׂאוּ נֹס"⁴⁴. וְלָפִי
שְׁהוּא גְבוּהָ לְאוֹת וְלִרְאָיָה, קוֹרְאוֹ "נֹס": כֹּל הַנִּשּׁוּף.
אֶפְלוּ כָלֵב אוֹ חֲמוֹר נוֹשְׁבוּ, הֵיךְ נִזּוֹק וּמִתְנַנֵּה וְהוֹלָךְ,
אֵלָּא שְׁנִשְׁכַּת הַנֶּחֱשׁ מִמְּהָרָת לְהַמִּית, לָכֵן נֹאמַר כָּאֵן:
"וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ", רָאָה בְּעֵלְמָא. וּבְנִשְׁכַּת הַנֶּחֱשׁ נֹאמַר:
"וְהִבִּיט" — "וְהָיָה אִם נִשּׁוּף הַנֶּחֱשׁ אֶת אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט וְגו'."
— שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה מְמַהֵר נִשּׁוּף הַנֶּחֱשׁ לְהִתְרַפְּאוֹת, אֵלָּא אִם
כֵּן מְבִיט בּוֹ בְּכֹנֶנָה. וְאַמְרוּ רְבוּתֵינוּ⁴⁵: וְכִי נֶחֱשׁ מִמִּית
אוֹ מַחֲיָה? אֵלָּא בְּזִמְנֵי שְׁהוּי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִסְתַּכְּלִין בְּלָפִי
מַעֲלָה וּמִשְׁעַבְדִּין אֶת לִבָּם לְאַבְיָהֶם שֶׁבִּשְׂמִים — הֵיוּ
מִתְרַפְּאִים, וְאִם לֹא — הֵיוּ נִמוּקִים:

5 בָּאלֹהִים וּבְמֹשֶׁה. הִשּׁוּי עֲבַד לְקוֹנוֹ: לֵמָּה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ.
שְׁנִיָּהֶם שׁוּיִם: וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה. אָף זֶה לְשׁוֹן קָצוֹר נִפְשׁ
וּמָאוֹס: בַּלָּחֶם הַקָּלֶקֶל. לָפִי שְׁהֵמֵן נִבְלַע בְּאִיבְרִים,
קָרְאוּהוּ "קָלֹקֶל", אָמְרוּ: "עֲתִיד הֵמֶן הַזֶּה שְׁיִתְּפַח
בְּמַעֲיָנו, כְּלוּם יֵשׁ יוֹלֵד אִשָּׁה שְׂמֻכְנִים וְאֵינוּ מוֹצִיא?":
6 אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים. שְׁשׁוּרְפִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶס
שְׁנִיָּהֶם: וַיִּנְשְׁבוּ אֶת הָעָם. יָבֹא נֶחֱשׁ שְׁלָקָה עַל הוֹצָאת
דְּבָה, וַיִּפְרַע מִמוֹצִיאֵי דְבָה. יָבֹא נֶחֱשׁ שְׁכָל הַמִּינִין
נִטְעָמִין לוֹ טַעַם אֶחָד, וַיִּפְרַע מִכְּפֻנֵי טוֹבָה, שְׁדָבֵר אֶחָד
מִשְׁתַּנָּה לָהֶם לְכִמְהָ טַעָמִים: 7 וַיִּתְּפַלֵּל מֹשֶׁה. מִכָּאֵן
לְמִי שְׂמֻכְקָשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ מַחֲלָה, שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה אֲכֹזְרִי מִלְּמַחֲלָה:
8 עַל נֹס. עַל כְּלוֹנֵס, שְׂקוֹרִים פִּירִק"א בְּלַעְזִי, וְכֵן:

41. מוֹט. 42. יִשְׁעִיה ל' יז. 43. יִשְׁעִיה מוֹט, כב. 44. יִשְׁעִיה יג, ב. 45. רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כט, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

the intellect, explaining why we should succumb to his suggestions and ignore our commitments to God and our better selves. In such cases, it is often enough to marshal our intellectual powers against him, pausing to contemplate how unprofitable it is to follow his lead on the one hand, and how wise it is to remain true to our higher callings on the other. This is "the route the spies had taken," seeking out the natural means of conquering the enemy and using them.

At other times, the inner Amalek brazenly defies logic, insisting on our obedience without any regard to rhyme or reason. In such cases, our logical resources are of no help; we can only fall back on our transcendent relationship with God that also surpasses reason and intellect. When we remind ourselves of our intrinsic bond with God, Amalek is powerless to overcome us. This is relying on "the Ark of the Covenant," which scatters all our enemies before us.⁹¹

7 Moses prayed on behalf of the people: Our sages teach us that although this incident does illustrate Moses' exceptional character and selfless devotion to his people, this point has already been made and there is no need for the Torah to emphasize it again. Rather, Moses' wholehearted forgiveness of the people who slandered him is intended to serve as an example for us.⁹² When we forgive someone only "officially," we indeed cause him to be spared any Divine punishment for his acts against us. But when we forgive him completely, cleansing ourselves of any residual grudge against him, we are moved to pray for his overall well-being and spiritual betterment as well.

In this, Moses' example exceeds that given by Abraham when he forgave Abimelech.⁹³ Abraham asked God only to reverse the punishment He had meted out to the Philistines, but no more. We are therefore told to take our cue from Moses' example.⁹⁴

91. See above, 10:35. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 83-84. 92. Rashi, based on *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Chukat* 19. 93. Genesis 20:17. 94. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 138-144.

5 The people spoke both against God and against Moses, mistakenly putting him on a par with God. They said, **“Why have the two of you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no normal bread, only the manna, and no normal water supply, only the traveling well, and we are weary of this light manna-bread**, which is miraculously absorbed into our bodies, producing no waste products. We have been eating it for 38 years, and are afraid it will eventually explode in our stomachs.”

6 GOD said, “Let the snake, who was punished for its slander, come exact punishment from these people who slandered Me. Let the snake, to whom all things taste the same, come and exact punishment from these people who eat one thing that tastes like anything they wish.” He **sent against the people the venomous snakes, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died**. Other animals started biting the people as well, and their bites also killed, although more slowly than the snakes’ bites.

7 The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against God and against you. Pray to God that He remove the snakes from us.” Even though the people had wronged him, **Moses** forgave them completely and even **prayed on behalf of the people**, asking God not only to forgive them and stop punishing them, but to strengthen them spiritually against the sins that had brought on the punishment.

8 GOD answered Moses’ prayer and told him how to accomplish all he had asked for. He **said to Moses**, “I will forgive them, as you have, for having spoken against us. However, in order to strengthen them against sinning in general, it is not enough that they repent for this particular sin; they must repent for *all* their sins and rededicate themselves to Me completely. Until they do this, the snakes and other animals will continue to attack them. Therefore, **make yourself**—i.e., using your own money, to express how fully you forgive the people and seek their betterment⁸⁹—an image of a **venomous snake and put it on a pole, and let whoever was bitten** by a snake look at it. This will help them focus on why they are suffering and—when they look intently toward heaven—help them submit their hearts to Me and thereby repent properly. I will then cure them of the rapid effects of the snakes’ bites. Those who need to repent less were bitten by other animals; all they need to do is **look fleetingly at** the snake image and think about heaven; this will be enough to inspire them to repent properly so I can cure them **and they, too, will live.**”

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play by the rules if you expect to survive.”

The Torah here tells us that even though it sounds like we’re talking to an astute businessman, we should recognize that it is really Amalek, the arch-enemy of Israel, who is talking. Despite his concessions to our private spiritual life, his goal is to wipe us out. Therefore, the only proper response to this

inner voice is to wipe it out first, by constantly renewing our impetuous enthusiasm for God and His Torah, and our desire to see it assume its rightful role as our guide in all aspects of life.⁹⁰

By the route the spies had taken...and when they saw the Ark of the Covenant: The inner Amalek attacks us in two ways. Sometimes he attacks via

⁸⁹. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 138-144. ⁹⁰. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 208-213.

— ONKELOS —

9 וַעֲבַד מֹשֶׁה חֲזִיָּא דְנִחְשָׁא וְשִׁנְיָה
עַל אֵת וְהוּדָה בְּדִ נִחְשָׁא יֵת גְּבֵרָא
וּמִסְתַּכַּל בְּחֲזִיָּא דְנִחְשָׁא וּמִתְקִים:
10 וְנָטְלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׂרוּ בְּאֵבֶת:
11 וְנָטְלוּ מֵאֵבֶת וְשָׂרוּ בְּמִגּוֹת
עֲבָרָי בְּמִדְבָּרָא דִּי עַל אִפִּי מוֹאֵב
מִמִּדְנַח שְׁמִישָׁא: 12 מִתְמָן נָטְלוּ
וְשָׂרוּ בְּנִחְלָא דְזֹרֵד: 13 מִתְמָן
נָטְלוּ וְשָׂרוּ מִעֲבָרָא דְאַרְנוֹן דִּי
בְּמִדְבָּרָא דְנִפְק מִתְחֻס אֲמוֹרָאָה
אַרְי אַרְנוֹן תְּחוּס מוֹאֵב בֵּין מוֹאֵב
וּבֵין אֲמוֹרָאָה:

9 וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נָחֶשׁ נִחְשֶׁת וַיִּשְׁמְהוּ עַל־הֶנֶם וְהָיָה אִם־
נִשְׁךְ הַנִּחְשֶׁת אֶת־אִישׁ וְהָבִיט אֶל־נָחֶשׁ הַנִּחְשֶׁת וְחָיָה:
◆ שִׁישִׁי 10 וַיִּסְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּאֵבֶת: 11 וַיִּסְעוּ מֵאֵבֶת
וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעֵי הָעֲבָרִים בְּמִדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי מוֹאֵב מִמִּזְרַח
הַשָּׁמֶשׁ: 12 מִשָּׁם נָסְעוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּנִחַל זֹרֵד: 13 מִשָּׁם נָסְעוּ
וַיַּחֲנוּ מִעֲבַר אַרְנוֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבָּר הַיָּצֵא מִגְּבֹל הָאֱמֹרִי כִּי
אַרְנוֹן גְּבֹל מוֹאֵב בֵּין מוֹאֵב וּבֵין הָאֱמֹרִי:

— RASHI —

וּמִזְרָחָהּ, עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ מִעֵבֶר הַשְּׁנִי לְאַרְנוֹן בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ
הָאֱמֹרִי, בְּצִפּוֹנָהּ שֶׁל אֶרֶץ מוֹאֵב: הַיָּצֵא מִגְּבֹל הָאֱמֹרִי.
רְצוּעָה יוֹצֵאָה מִגְּבֹל הָאֱמֹרִי, וְהִיא שֶׁל אֲמוֹרִיִּים,
וְנִכְסֶט לְגִבּוֹל מוֹאֵב עַד אַרְנוֹן שֶׁהוּא גְּבֹל מוֹאֵב,
וְשָׁם חָנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְלֹא בָּאוּ לְגִבּוֹל מוֹאֵב, כִּי אַרְנוֹן גְּבֹל
מוֹאֵב, וְהֵם לֹא נָתְנוּ לָהֶם רְשׁוּת לַעֲבֹר בְּאֶרֶץ. וְאֵף עַל
פִּי שֶׁלֹּא פָּרְשָׁה מֹשֶׁה, פָּרְשָׁה יִפְתָּח, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר יִפְתָּח:
"וְגַם אֶל מֶלֶךְ מוֹאֵב שָׁלַח וְלֹא אָבָה"⁴⁹. וּמֹשֶׁה רָמְזָה:
"כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי בְנֵי עֲשׂוּ הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשָׁעִיר, וְהַמּוֹאֲבִים
הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעַר"⁵⁰, מִזֶּה אֵלּוּ לֹא נָתְנוּם לַעֲבֹר בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ,
אֶלָּא הִקִּיפּוּם סָבִיב, אֵף מוֹאֵב כֵּן:

9 נָחֶשׁ נִחְשֶׁת. לֹא נֶאֱמַר לוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ שֶׁל נִחְשֶׁת, אֶלָּא
אָמַר מֹשֶׁה: "הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קוֹרְא 'נָחֶשׁ' וְאֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂנוּ
שֶׁל 'נִחְשֶׁת', לָשׁוֹן נּוֹפֵל עַל לָשׁוֹן": 11 בְּעֵי הָעֲבָרִים. לֹא
יִדְעִתִּי לָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָם "עֵיִם", וְ"עֵי" לָשׁוֹן חֲרָבָה הוּא,
דָּבָר הֶסְאוֹט בְּמִסְטָא, וְהָעֵי"ן בּוֹ יִסּוֹד לְבִדָּה, וְהוּא
מִלְשׁוֹן "יַעֲיִם"⁴⁶, "וַיַּעַד בְּרַד"⁴⁷: הָעֲבָרִים. דֶּרֶךְ מִעֵבֶר
הָעֲבָרִים שֶׁם אֵת הָר נָבו אֶל אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, שֶׁהוּא מִפְּסִיק
בֵּין אֶרֶץ מוֹאֵב לְאֶרֶץ אֲמוֹרִי: עַל פְּנֵי מוֹאֵב מִמִּזְרַח
הַשָּׁמֶשׁ. בְּמִזְרָחָהּ שֶׁל אֶרֶץ מוֹאֵב: 13 מִגְּבֹל הָאֱמֹרִי.
תְּחוּס סוּף יַמִּצֵּר שְׁלָהֶם, וְכֵן: "גְּבֹל מוֹאֵב"⁴⁸, לָשׁוֹן
קִצָּה וְסוּף: מִעֵבֶר אַרְנוֹן. הִקִּיפוּ אֶרֶץ מוֹאֵב כָּל דְּרוֹמָה

46. שמות לח, ג. 47. ישעיה כח, יז. 48. דברים ב, יח. 49. שופטים יא, יז. 50. דברים ב, כט.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

8-9 God said, "Make a venomous snake": In responding to their sin by unleashing deadly, poisonous snakes against them, God was telling the people that sin—which was introduced to humanity by the primordial snake—leads to death, while submission to God's will is the key to life.

Since the snakes were deadly, anyone who had been bitten was for all intents and purposes already dead. Healing the bitten person was thus tantamount to resurrecting him.

Now, in order to resurrect a dead person, it is not enough to simply infuse his body with life, because the body has already lost its capacity to support life. First, the dead body has to be made capable once more of living. This can be done only by a force that transcends the laws of nature, including the dichotomy of life and death. Infusing this transcendent force into the dead body restores its capacity to support life, after which the person's soul can re-enter it and he can live again.

This is why God also commanded Moses to heal the people using a snake. By using the image of the deadly, primordial snake to restore life, God indicated to them that resurrection requires eliciting a level of Divinity that transcends the dichotomy of life and death.

When the people saw the snake, they understood that in order to elicit this transcendent Divinity and be healed, they had to transform their own, inner "snake"—their evil inclination—into a force of good.

The evil inclination impels us to sin for comfort, pleasure, or excitement. When we convince it that the truest comfort, pleasure, and excitement lie in holiness, it plunges headlong into fulfilling God's purpose on earth, endowing our drive toward Divinity with much greater power than it could have had otherwise. Thus, the initially evil inclination becomes a source of merit and goodness. The snake is transformed from the source of death to the agent of life.¹⁰⁴

104. Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, pp. 75-77.

9 So Moses made a copper snake and put it on a pole. He made it out of copper even though God had not so stipulated because the word for “snake” (*nachash*) is akin to that for “copper” (*nechoshet*). If a snake had bitten a man and he looked intently toward the copper snake and submitted his heart to God, he was cured and lived. But if another animal had bitten him, he only had to glance at the snake and submit his heart to God in order to be cured—just as God had promised.⁹⁵

Miracles at the Arnon Gorge

◆ **Sixth Reading 10** At this point, they were near the southern border of Moab, but since, as we saw,⁹⁶ the Moabites had denied them passage through their land, the Israelites journeyed eastward from Punon, skirting the southern border of Moab, and camped in Ovot.

11 They then journeyed further eastward from Ovot and turned northward, camping by the ruins of the two passes: the pass that leads toward Mount Nebo—which itself is the pass from the original border of Moab to the territory of the Amorites. This pass is in the desert east of Moab.

12 They journeyed northward from the ruins of the pass, along the eastern border of Moab, and encamped at Divon Gad,⁹⁷ in the valley of the Zered River. God told Moses at this point⁹⁸ that although the people were approaching Ammon, which lay somewhat beyond the Arnon River, they should not try to conquer it either, for it was not part of the land He intended to give them.⁹⁹ He also did not want them to attack the Ammonites because one of King Solomon’s wives would descend from them.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, whereas God had allowed the people to frighten, raid, and plunder the Moabites, He forbade them from doing this to the Ammonites, because their ancestress had been more modest than the Moabites’ ancestress and the Ammonites, emulating her behavior, were less immoral than the Moabites.¹⁰¹ But, God told Moses, they should wage war with the Amorites and conquer their land, for this territory was permitted to them.¹⁰²

13 They journeyed further northward from there and encamped at Almon Divlataimah,¹⁰³ on the north side of the Arnon River, in a strip of land controlled by the Amorites that was in the desert and extended eastward from the main Amorite border. Thus, although the Arnon River was the Moabite border, this was true only of its western part, which passed between Moab and the Amorites. The eastern part of the Arnon River marked the division between the desert through which the Israelites were traveling (east of Moab) and the territory of the Amorites, which lay north of the Arnon (See Figure 7).

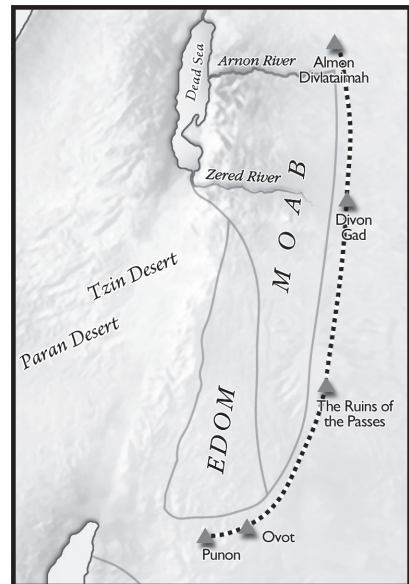


Figure 7: From Punon to Almon Divlataimah

95. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 71-75. 96. Above, on 20:21. 97. Below, 33:45. 98. Since He told them to cross the Arnon only after this (Deuteronomy 2:17-19, 24). 99. Deuteronomy 2:19. 100. Rashi on 31:2, below; see on Genesis 13:5. 101. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 5. 102. Deuteronomy 2:24. 103. Numbers 33:46.

ONKELOS

14 על פן יאמר בספר מלחמת יהוה את-זהב בסור
 דעבר יי על ימא דסוף וגבורן דעל
 נחלי ארנון: 15 וישפור נחליא
 דמדברין לקבל לחית ומסתמין
 לתחום מואב: 16 ומתמן
 אתיהיבת להון בירא היא בירא
 די אמר יי למשה כגוש ית עמא
 ואיהב להון מיא: 17 בכן שבח
 ישראל ית תשבחתא הדא
 סקי בירא שבחו לה: 18 בירא
 דחפרוה ברבכא כרוה רישי
 עמא ספריא בחטריהון וממדברא
 אתיהיבת להון: 19 ומדאתיהיבת
 להון נחתא עמהון לנחליא
 ומנחליא סלקא עמהון לרמתא:
 20 ומרמתא לחילתא די בחקלי
 מואב ריש רמתא ומסתבא על
 אפי בית ישימון:

14 על-פן יאמר בספר מלחמת יהוה את-זהב בסור
 פה ואת-הנחלים ארנון: 15 ואשר הנחלים אשר נטה
 לשבת ער ונשען לגבול מואב: 16 ומשם בארה הוא
 הבאר אשר אמר יהוה למשה אסף את-העם ואתנה
 להם מים: ס

17 אז ישיר ישראל את-השירה הזאת עלי באר ענו
 לה: 18 באר חפרוה שרים כרוה נדיבי העם במחקק
 במשענתם וממדבר מתנה: 19 וממתנה נחליאל ומנח
 ליאל במות: 20 ומבמות הניא אשר בשדה מואב ראש
 הפסגה ונשקפה על-פני הישימון: פ

RASHI

ההרגים וזרועות ואיברים, ומוליכתן סביב המנה, וישראל ראו ואמרו שירה: 17 עלי באר. מתוך הנחל, והעלי מה שאת מעלה. ומנן שהבאר הודיעה להם? שגאמר: "ומשם בארה". וכי משם היתה, והלא מתחלת ארבעים שנה היתה עמקה? אלא, שירדה לפרסם את הנסים, וכן: "אז ישיר ישראל". השירה הזאת נאמרה בסוף ארבעים, והבאר נתנה להם מתחלת ארבעים, ומה ראה לכתב כאן? אלא הענין הזה נדרש למעלה הימנו: 18 באר חפרוה. זאת היא הבאר אשר חפרוה שרים — משה ואהרן: במשענתם. במטה: וממדבר. נתנה להם: 19 וממתנה נחליאל. כתרוממו: 20 ומבמות הניא אשר בשדה מואב. כי שם מת משה, ושם בטלה הבאר. דבר אחר: "כרוה נדיבי העם", כל נשיא ונשיא, כשהיו חונים, נוטל מקלו ומושה אצל דגלו ומחנהו, ומי הבאר נמשכין דרך אותו סימן ובאין לפני חנית כל שבט ושבט: במחקק. על פי משה שנקרא "מחוקק", שגאמר: "כי שם חלקת מחקק ספון"⁵². ולמה לא נזכר משה בשירה זו? לפי שלקה על ידי הבאר. וכיון שלא נזכר שמו של משה, לא נזכר שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא. משל למלך שהיו מומנין אותו לסעודה, אמר: "אם אוהבי שם — אני שם, ואם לאו — אני הולך". ראש הפסגה. כתרוממו: "ריש רמתא". פסגה. לשון גבה, וכן: "פסגו ארמנותיה"⁵³ — הגביהו ארמנותיה: ונשקפה. אותה הפסגה על פני המקום ששמו ישימון, והוא לשון מדבר, שהוא שמו. דבר אחר: ונשקפה הבאר על פני הישימון, שנגנזה בימה של טבריה, והעומד על הישימון מביט ורואה כמין כברה בים והיא הבאר. כך דרש רבי תנחומא:

14 על פן. על חניה זו ונסים שנעשו בה: יאמר בספר מלחמת ה'. כשמשפירים נסים שנעשו לאבותינו, יספרו "את זהב וגו'": את זהב. כמו "את יהב", כמו שיאמר מן "עזד" "נעד", כן יאמר מן "יהב" "יהב", והני"ו יסוד הוא, כלומר: את אשר יהב להם הרבה נסים בים סוף: ואת הנחלים ארנון. כשם שמשפירים בנסי ים סוף, כך יש לספר בנסי נחלי ארנון, שאף כאן נעשו נסים גדולים. ומה הם הנסים: 15 ואשר הנחלים. תרגום של "שפף"⁵¹ "אשד" — שפף הנחלים, שנשפף שם דם אמוריים, שהיו נחבאים שם, לפי שהיו ההרים גבוהים והנחל עמק וקצר, וההרים סמוכים זה לזה, אדם עומד על ההר מזה ומדבר עם חברו בהר מזה והדרך עובר תוך הנחל. אמרו אמוריים: "כשיכנסו ישראל לתוך הנחל לעבר, נצא מן המערות בהרים שלמעלה מהם, ונהרגם בחצים ואבני בליסטראות". והיו אותן הנקעים בהר של צד מואב, ובהר של צד אמוריים היו כנגד אותן נקעים כמין קרנות ושידים בולטין לחוץ, כיון שבאו ישראל לעבר, נודעו ההר של ארץ ישראל כשפחה היוצאת להקביל פני גברתה, ונתקרב לצד הר של מואב ונכנסו אותן השדים לתוך אותן נקעים והרגום. וזהו: "אשר נטה לשבת ער", שהיה נטה ממקומו ונתקרב לצד מואב ונדבק בו, וזהו: "ונשען לגבול מואב". ועברו ישראל על ההרים ולא ידעו הנסים האלו אלא על ידי הבאר שנקנס לשם: 16 ומשם בארה. משם בא האשד אל הבאר. כיצד? אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: "מי מודיע לבני הנסים הללו?" המשל אומר: נתת פת לתינוק, הודיע לאמו. לאחר שעברו — חזרו ההרים למקומם והבאר ירדה לתוך הנחל והעלתה משם דם

51. ויקרא ד, יב. 52. דברים ל, כא. 53. תהלים מ, יד.

14 As the Arnon River empties into the Dead Sea, it passes between Moab and the territory of the Amorites, flowing through a gorge between two cliffs. On the southern, Moabite side of the river, there were caves in the cliffs; on the northern, Amorite side, there were rocky projections opposite these caves. The Amorites hid in the caves, maliciously planning to bombard the Israelites with arrows and rocks when they passed below along the river. But as the Israelites approached, the northern cliff, which would soon be possessed by the Israelites, trembled in anticipation of this, as it were, and thus the rocky projections entered the caves and killed the Amorites hidden there. When the cliff returned to its place, the blood and limbs of the Amorites fell off the projections into the ravine below. God then made the well that accompanied the Israelites on their journeys descend into this river of blood and limbs and miraculously ascend back to the Israelite camp and flow all around it, displaying the Amorites' blood and limbs (especially their powerful, muscular arms),¹⁰⁵ so the people could know about the miracle He had performed for them and appreciate it. Therefore, **concerning this** encampment, **it is told whenever** people **recount the wars that God** fought for the Jews, "Just as we relate **what** miracles **He gave** the Israelites **at the** Sea of **Reeds**, where He fought for them and they had to do nothing,¹⁰⁶ so should we relate the miracles He performed for them at **the valleys of the Arnon River**, when He also fought their enemies by Himself."¹⁰⁷

15 Specifically: **the spillage of** Amorite blood and limbs into **the valleys that** resulted when the cliff moved southward **toward the dwelling of Ar**, the capital district of Moab, **and leaned toward the border of Moab**.

16 **From there**, the flow of blood and limbs ran **into the well; that is the well of which God said to Moses, 'Gather the people, and I will give them water.'** "

17 **Then**, when they realized that God had performed this miracle for them, **Israel sang this song: "Ascend, O well, and show what you have to show! And let us sing to it!**

18 **It is a well dug by** Moses and Aaron, our **princes, carved out by nobles of the people, through Moses the lawgiver, with their staffs, and from the desert** God gave it to us as a **gift. It is a well** that flows into channels **dug by the princes** of each tribe at every stop **with their staffs**, in order to bring water to their respective tribes.

19 **After** it was given to us as a **gift**, it descended with us **to the valleys, and from the valleys** it ascended with us **to the heights**.

20 **From the heights** it will descend **to the valley in the field of Moab**, where Moses will die **at the top of the peak** of Mount Nebo, **which overlooks the wastelands**. There it will stop, and resurface in the Sea of Galilee, from whence it **overlooks the wastelands**." Moses' name is not mentioned in this song because he was punished for striking the rock when attempting to restore the well, and since Moses' name is not mentioned in it, God did not allow Himself to be mentioned in it either.

105. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, pp. 148-156. 106. See Exodus 14:14. 107. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, pp. 153-154.

— ONKELOS —

21 וישלח ישראל אנגדין לות
סיחון מלכא דאמוראא למימרי:
22 אעבר בארעך לא נסטי בחקל
ובכרם לא נשתי מי גוב באר
מלכא גול עד די נעבר תחומי:
23 ולא שבק סיחון ית ישראל
למעבר בתחומה וכנש סיחון ית
כל עמה ונפק לקדמות ישראל
למדברא ואתא ליחזי ואגח קרבא
בישראל: 24 ומחיה ישראל
לפתגם דחרב וירת ית ארעה
מארנוא עד יבקא עד בני עמון
ארי תקיף תחומא דבני עמון:

◆ שביעי (רביעי במחזורין) 21 וישלח ישראל מלאכים אל-
סיחון מלך-האמרי לאמר: 22 אעברה בארצך לא נטה
בשדה ובכרם לא נשתה מי באר בדרך המלך נלך עד
אשר-נעבר ונבלך: 23 ולא-נתן סיחון את-ישראל עבר
בגבולו ויאסף סיחון את-כל-עמו ויצא לקראת ישראל
המדברה ויבא יהצה וילחם בישראל: 24 ויכהו ישראל
לפי-חרב ויירש את-ארצו מארנן עד-יבב עד-בני עמון
כי עז גבול בני עמון:

— RASHI —

איני יושב כאן, אלא לשמכם מפניכם, ואתם אומרים
כך: "ויצא לקראת ישראל". אלו היתה חשבון מלכה
יתושין, אין כל בריה יכולה לכבשה, ואם היה סיחון
בכפר חלש, אין כל אדם יכול לכבשו, וכל שכן שהיה
בחשבון. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: "מה אני מטריח על
בני כל זאת לצור על כל עיר ועיר?" נתן בלב כל אנשי
המלחמה לצאת מן העירות, ונתקבצו כלם למקום
אחד ושם נפלו, ומשם הלכו ישראל אל הערים ואין
עומד לנגדם, כי אין שם אלא נשים וטף: 24 פי עז.
ומהו חוקי התרתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, שאמר
להם: "אל תצרו וגו'":⁵⁷

21 וישלח ישראל מלאכים. ובמקום אחר תולה
השליחות במשה, שנאמר: "ואשלח מלאכים ממדבר
קדמות"⁵⁴, וכן: "וישלח משה מלאכים מקדש אל מלך
אדום"⁵⁵, וביפתח הוא אומר: "וישלח ישראל מלאכים
אל מלך אדום וגו'".⁵⁶ התובים הללו צריכים זה
לזה, זה נועל וזה פותח, שמושה הוא ישראל וישראל
הם משה, לומר לה שגשיא הדור הוא ככל הדור, כי
הנשיא הוא הכל: 22 אעברה בארצך. אף על פי שלא
נצטוו לפתח להם בשלום, בקשו מהם שלום: 23 ולא
נתן סיחון וגו'. לפי שכל מלכי כנען היו מעלין לו מס,
שהיה שומרם שלא יעברו עליהם גיסות. כיון שאמרו
לו ישראל: "אעברה בארצך", אמר להם: "כל עצמי

54 דברים ב, כו. 55 במדבר כ, יד. 56 שופטים יא, יז. 57 דברים ב, יט.

sword, and thus took possession of his entire land at once, from the Arnon River northward to the Yabok River, and as far east as the Ammonites (See Figure 8). They did not battle the Ammonites, for, as was mentioned previously,¹¹⁵ the border of the Ammonites was protected by God's forbiddance and was thus effectively too strong for them.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

21 Israel sent messengers: The fact that the Torah says that Moses sent messengers to Edom but Israel sent messengers to Sichon, even though in both cases Moses sent the messengers on behalf of all Israel, teaches us that the two entities — Moses and Israel — are essentially equivalent.¹¹⁶ The true Jewish leader does not just represent the people (even in their best interests), he is one with them in essence. His affairs are not compartmentalized into his private and public lives, for he is a public servant to his very core. Therefore, anything he does is considered to

have been done by the whole people.

Furthermore, his total identification with the people and selfless devotion to them makes him the conduit through which God provides all their material and spiritual needs. Therefore, not only is he one with them: they are one with him. They can rise to his perspective on reality and share his Divine consciousness and his inspired life, even if they have not yet refined themselves enough to be worthy of these on their own.¹¹⁷

115. Above, on v. 12. 116. Rashi on this verse. 117. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, pp. 131-136.

The Battle with Sichon

- ◆ *Seventh Reading (Fourth when combined)* 21 In Elul 2487,¹⁰⁸ while they were at Almon Divlataimah, the people prepared to conquer the Amorites. There were two Amorite kings: Sichon, who controlled the area between the Arnon and Yabok Rivers, and Og, who controlled the land north of the Yabok. Although God had told him to *fight* Sichon, Moses first **sent messengers to Sichon the king of the Amorites** to ask him, on behalf of all **Israel**, to let them pass peacefully through his land. Moses had learned from God's example: God had sent Moses to politely ask the Egyptians to release the Jewish people before He fought the Egyptians, and had offered the Torah to the other nations before giving it to the Jewish people.¹⁰⁹ When Moses had asked the Edomites to let the people pass through their land, he had sent the messengers in his own name.¹¹⁰ This time, however, he did not, since God had promised that the Israelites would be victorious and there was therefore no need to frighten Sichon.¹¹¹ He told the messengers **to say:**

22 **"Let us pass through your land. We will not venture into fields or vineyards or drink water from the well that accompanies us on our travels and is our constant source of water. Instead, we will buy food and drink from you, like good guests, so you can benefit financially for allowing us passage. We will walk along the king's road, and we will muzzle our animals, not allowing them to graze in your fields, until we have passed through your territory."**

23 Had Sichon agreed, the Israelites would not have conquered his territory and would have proceeded to cross the Jordan into Canaan. For even though God had promised this territory to Abraham and had commanded Moses to conquer it, Moses understood that it would be preferable to conquer Canaan first. That way, any land conquered afterwards—including the territories of Sichon and Og—would have the legal and spiritual status of Canaan. Indeed, if not for the sin of the spies, the people would have entered the land from the south and would have naturally conquered Canaan first.¹¹² **But** God made **Sichon** stubborn, and he **did not permit Israel to pass through his territory**, for in fact, he and Og collected tribute from the Canaanite kings in exchange for protecting them from invaders. So the Israelites had no choice but to engage Sichon in battle. The Amorites were very strong, and their cities were well fortified. To spare the Israelites the trouble of combating each city individually, God inspired **Sichon to gather all his people, and he went out with them to the desert toward Israel. He arrived at Yahatz and they all fought against Israel at once.**¹¹³ God made the sun stand still to prolong the day for the battle.¹¹⁴

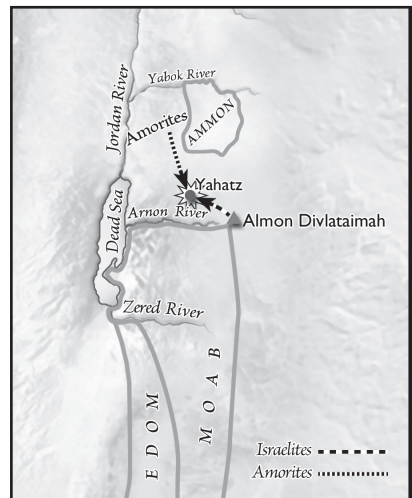


Figure 8: The Battle with Sichon

24 **Israel smote him and his people with the**

108. *Midrash Tanchuma, Chukat* 24. 109. Rashi on Deuteronomy 2:26. 110. See 20:14, above. 111. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 145. 112. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 2, p. 544; p. 546, note 68. 113. Deuteronomy 2:32. 114. Rashi on Deuteronomy 2:25.

— ONKELOS —

25 וכבש ישראל ית כל קרניא האלין ויתב ישראל בכל קרני אמוראָה בחשבון ובכל כפרנהא: 26 ארי חשבון קרתא דסיחון מלכא דאמוראָה היא והוא אגח קרבא במלכא דמואב קדמאָה ונסיב ית כל ארעה מידה עד ארנון: 27 על כן ימרון מתליא עולו לחשבון תבנה ותשתכלל קרתא דסיחון: 28 ארי קדום תסיף באשא נפק מחשבון עבדי קרבא בשלהוביתא מקרתא דסיחון קטילו עמא דשרו בלחית מואב במריא דפלחין בית דחלא רמתא דארנון: 29 וי לכו מואבאי אבדתון עמא דפלחין לכמוש מטר בנוהי צירין ובנתה בשביא למלכא דאמוראָה סחון: 30 ומלכו פסקת מחשבון עדא שולטן מדיבון וצדיאו עד נפח דסמיך עד מידבא: 31 ויתב ישראל בארע אמוראָה:

25 וַיִּקַּח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל־הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל־עָרֵי הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן וּבְכָל־בְּנֵיהָ: 26 כִּי חֶשְׁבּוֹן עִיר סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי הוּא וְהוּא נָלַחַם בְּמֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב הָרֹאשׁוֹן וַיִּקַּח אֶת־כָּל־אֶרְצוֹ מִיָּדוֹ עַד־אֲרֹנָן: 27 עַל־כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ הַמּוֹשְׁלִים בָּאוּ חֶשְׁבּוֹן תִּבְנֶה וְתִכּוֹנֵן עִיר סִיחֹן: 28 כִּי־אִשׁ יֵצֵאָה מִחֶשְׁבּוֹן לָהֶבֶת מִקִּרְיַת סִיחֹן אֲכָלָה עַר מוֹאָב בַּעֲלֵי בָמוֹת אֲרֹנָן: 29 אוֹי־לָהּ מוֹאָב אֲבֵדְתָּ עִם־כְּמוֹשׁ נֹתָן בְּנֵיו פְּלִיטִם וּבְנֹתֶיהָ בַּשְּׂבִית לְמֶלֶךְ אֱמֹרִי סִי־חֹן: 30 וַיָּנִירָם אֲבֹד חֶשְׁבּוֹן עַד־דִּיבֹן וְנָשִׁים עַד־נֹפַח אֲשֶׁר עַד־מִידְבָּא: 31 וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאָרֶץ הָאֱמֹרִי:

— RASHI —

המדינה קרוי "ער" בלשון עברי, ו"לחית" בלשון ארמי: **ער מואב**. ער של מואב: 29 **אוי לך מואב**. שקללו את מואב, שימסרו בידו: **כמוש**. שם אלהי מואב: **נתן**. הנותן את בניו של מואב: **פליטים**. נסים ופליטים מחרב, "ואת בנותיו בשבית וגו'": 30 **ונירים אבד**. מלכות שלקם: **אבד חשבון עד דיבן**. מלכות ועל שהיה למואב בחשבון אבד משם, וכן "עד דיבן", תרגום של "סר" — "עד", כלומר סר ניר מדיבן. "ניר" - לשון מלכות ועל ממשלת איש, כמו: "למען היות ניר לך ויד עבדי": **ונשים**. שייך דגושה, לשון שקמה. כך יאמרו המושלים ונשים אותם: **עד נפח**. השמונום עד נפח:

25 **בניה**. כפרים הסמוכים לה: 26 **והוא נלחם**. למה הצרך להכתב? לפי שנאמר: "אל תצר את מואב"⁵⁸, וחשבון משל מואב היתה, כתב לנו שסיחון לקחה מהם, ועל ידו טהרה לישראל: **מידו**. מרשותו: 27 **על כן**. על אותה מלחמה שנלחם סיחון במואב: **יאמרו המושלים**. בלעם, שנאמר בו: "וישא משלו"⁵⁹: **המושלים**. בלעם ובגור, והם אמרו: **באו חשבון**. שלא היה סיחון יכול לכבשה, והלך ושכר את בלעם לקללו, והוא שאמר לו בלק: "כי ידעתי את אשר תברך מברך וגו'"⁶⁰: **תבנה ותכונן**. חשבון בשם סיחון להיות עירו: 28 **כי איש יצאה מחשבון**. משכבשה סיחון: **אכלה ער מואב**. שם אותה

58. דברים ב, ט. 59. במדבר כג, ז. 60. שם כב, ו. 61. מלכים א' יא, לו.

flame from the city of Sichon; it has consumed Ar, the capital district of Moab, wherein reside the masters of the altars of the Arnon River.

29 Woe to you, Moab; you are lost, people of your god, Kemosh. Moab has given his sons over as refugees and his daughters into captivity, to Sichon, king of the Amorites.

30 Their sovereignty over Cheshbon is destroyed; it has departed from Divon. We laid them waste as far as Nofach, which reaches until Medeva."

31 So Israel settled in the land of the Amorites.

25 Israel took all these cities, killed all their inhabitants,¹¹⁸ and plundered them,¹¹⁹ and, as will be seen later,¹²⁰ the Israelite tribes of Reuben and Gad dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, including Cheshbon and all its adjacent villages.

26 For although Cheshbon was originally part of Moab, and therefore off-limits to the Israelites, it was now the city of Sichon, king of the Amorites, for he had fought against the first king of Moab, taking all his land from his possession, as far south as the Arnon River (See Figure 9).

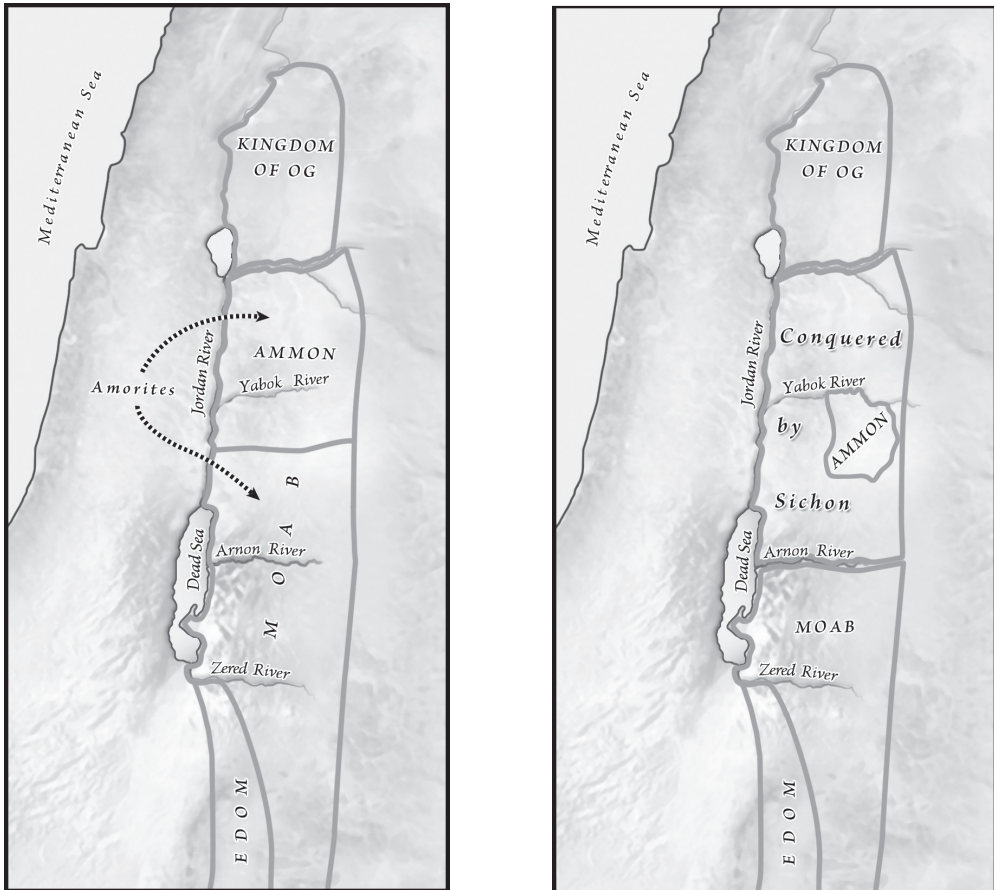


Figure 9: Sichon's Conquest of Ammon and Moab

27 Sichon had been able to capture it only by hiring the non-Jewish prophet Balaam to curse it. Balaam had begun his career as a dream interpreter, and then became a sorcerer and soothsayer. Finally, God granted him prophecy,¹²¹ so the non-Jews would not be able to complain that had God given them a prophet like Moses, they, too, would have accepted the Divine mission.¹²² Therefore, **concerning this war, Balaam and his father, Be'or (also a sorcerer and soothsayer), who speak in parables, said, "Come to Cheshbon, O Sichon, now that it has been cursed. May it be built and established as the city of Sichon.**

28 For a fire has gone forth from Cheshbon now that Sichon has captured it, a

118. Deuteronomy 2:34. 119. Ibid. 2:35. 120. Below, ch. 32. 121. Bemidbar Rabbah 7:20. 122. Rashi on 22:5, below.

—∞ ONKELOS ∞—

32 וְשִׁלַּח מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר לְאֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ
וּבְכַשׁוֹ כְּפָרְנֶהָ וְתָרַךְ יֵת אֲמוֹרָאָה
דִּי תַמּוֹן: 33 וְאֵת פְּנִיאוֹ וְסִלְקוֹ
לְאַרְח מִתְּנִן וְנִפֵּק עוֹג מִלְכָּא
דְּמִתְנִן לְקִדְמוּתְהוֹן הוּא וְכָל עֲמָה
לְאַנְחָא קֶרְבָּא לְאַדְרָעִי: 34 וְאָמַר
יְיָ לְמֹשֶׁה לֹא תִדְחַל מִנֶּה אֲרִי בִידְךָ
מִסְרִית יִתְּהָ וְיֵת כָּל עֲמָה וְיֵת אֶרֶץ
וְתַעֲבֹד לֵה כְּמָא דִּי עֲבַדְתָּ לְסִיחּוֹן
מִלְכָּא דְּאֲמוֹרָאָה דִּי יִתְבַּ בְּחֻשְׁבוֹן:
35 וּמָחוּ יִתְּהָ וְיֵת בְּנוּהִי וְיֵת כָּל
עֲמָה עַד דְּלֹא אֲשַׁתָּאֵר לֵה מִשְׁיּוּיב
וְיִרְיֵתוּ יֵת אֶרֶץ: 36 וְנִסְלוּ בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׂרוּ בְּמִשְׁרֵיָּא דְּמוֹאֵב
מַעְבְּרָא לִירְדָּנָא דִּירְחוּ:

32 וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְרַגֵּל אֶת־יַעֲזָר וַיִּלְכְּדוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּירֹשׁ
{וַיִּירֹשׁ} אֶת־הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם: 33 וַיִּפְּנוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ דָרֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן
וַיֵּצֵא עֹגֹ מֶלֶךְ־הַבָּשָׁן לִקְרֹאתָם הוּא וְכָל־עַמּוֹ לַמִּלְחָמָה
אֲדָרְעִי:

מפסיד 34 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶל־תִּירָא אֹתוֹ כִּי בִידִי
נָתַתִּי אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־עֲמּוֹ וְאֶת־אֲרָצוֹ וְעָשִׂיתָ לוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר
עָשִׂיתָ לְסִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר יוֹשֵׁב בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן׃ 35 וַיָּכּוּ
אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־עֲמּוֹ עַד־בִּלְתִּי הִשְׁאִירָלוּ שְׁרִיד
וַיִּירָשׁוּ אֶת־אֲרָצוֹ׃ 22:1 וַיִּסְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנּוּ בְּעַרְבֹת
מוֹאָב מֵעֵבֶר לִירְדֵן יַרְחוֹ׃

פ"ז פסוקים. למידב"א סימן. ימוא"ל סימן. עז"י סימן.

-∞ RASHI ∞

בְּדָלְעֶמֶר וְחִבְרִיו בְּעִשְׁתֹּרוֹת קָרְנִים, שָׁנָאמֹר: "דָּק עוֹג
מִלֶּךְ הַבֶּשֶׁן נִשְׂאָר מֵיִתֵּר הָרְפָאִים" ⁶³: 35 וַיְכּוּ אֹתוֹ. מִשָּׁה
הָרִגוּ, כְּדֹאִיתָא בְּכִרְכּוֹת בִּ"הֲרֹאָה" ⁶⁴: עָקַר טוֹרָא בַר
תַּלְתָּא פְרָסִי וְכוּ':

חסלת פרשת חקת

32 וישלח משה לרגל את יעזר. המרגלים לכוּדוּ.
אָמְרוּ: "לא נעשה כְּרָאשׁוֹנִים, בְּטוֹחִים אֲנִי בְּכַח תְּפִלָּתוֹ
שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה לְהִלָּחֵם:" 34 אַל תִּירָא אֹתוֹ. שֶׁהִיָּה מֹשֶׁה יֵרָא
לְהִלָּחֵם. שָׁמָּה תַעֲמֹד לוֹ וְזוֹתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם, שְׁנֵאָמֶר:
"יִיבֹא הַפְּלִיט!" 32 — הוּא עוֹג שְׁפֹלֵט מִן הָרִפְּאִים, שֶׁכֻּפּוֹ

62. בראשית יד, יג. 63. דברים ג, יא. 64. ברכות נד, ב.

mountain stuck on his head. In the meantime, Moses took a huge ax, jumped into the air, and struck Og in the ankle. Miraculously, this was enough to kill him.¹³⁰ The rest of the people killed Og's sons and all his people, until there was no survivor, and they took possession of his land and plundered the cities.¹³¹

22:1 After conquering Bashan, the Israelites journeyed from “The Mountains of the Passes” and encamped in the plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho (See Figure 12). These plains were no longer part of Moab; they were given this name when Moab extended northward past the Arnon River, before Sichon conquered this territory.



Figure 12: From The Mountains of the Passes to the Plains of Moab

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Chukat* may be found on p. 244.
The *Haftarah* for *Rosh Chodesh* may be found on p. 263.

32 After conquering Sichon, the people traveled from Almon Divlataimah and camped at a place called “The Mountains of the Passes,” near Mount Nebo,¹²³ which, as mentioned,¹²⁴ was the passageway on the original border between Moab and the Amorites. From this camp, **Moses sent men to spy out Ya’zer**, an Amorite district not included in Sichon’s territory. These spies resolved not to make the mistake of the spies who were sent from Ritmah, and moreover intended to rectify their error: instead of overstepping their mission negatively, as the first spies had done, they exceeded their mission positively. Although Moses had instructed them only to spy out the district, **they** relied on his prayers and also **captured its villages**,¹²⁵ **driving out the Amorites who lived there** (See Figure 10).

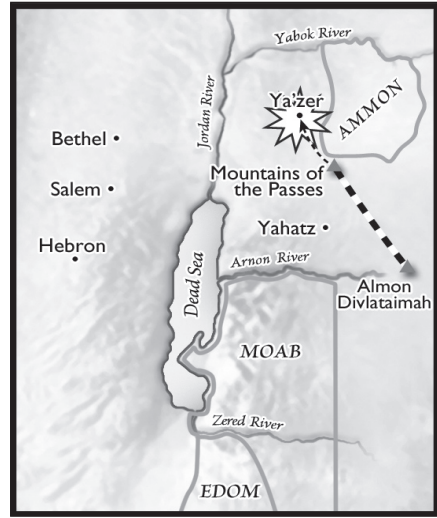


Figure 10: From Almon Divlataimah to The Mountains of the Passes; The Conquest of Ya’azer

The Battle with Og

33 On the 23rd of Tishrei, 2488 (after the holidays),¹²⁶ the army of the Israelites **turned and headed north** through Sichon’s former territory **toward the Bashan**, the area north of the Yabok River until Mount Hermon.¹²⁷ **Og, the giant king of Bashan, came out toward them with all his people to wage war at Edrei** (See Figure 11).

- ◆ **Maftir** 34 Moses was afraid to wage war against Og, for he thought he might be protected by the merit of having helped Abraham.¹²⁸ **God said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for your merit is enough to counterbalance his. Thus, I have delivered him, his people, and his land into your hand. You shall do to him as you did to Sichon, king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Cheshbon.”**

35 Og uprooted a mountain as wide as the entire Israelite camp, intending to drop it on them. By intending to kill the entire Jewish people, he lost all the merit he had earned by helping Abraham. Therefore, Moses no longer required his own merit to counterbalance Og’s; he approached Og as the people’s emissary, fulfilling their collective obligation to defend themselves.¹²⁹ Moses **smote** Og as follows: God sent ants to bore a hole in the mountain Og was carrying on his head, and it sank around his neck. When he tried to pull it off, God made his teeth grow out, keeping the

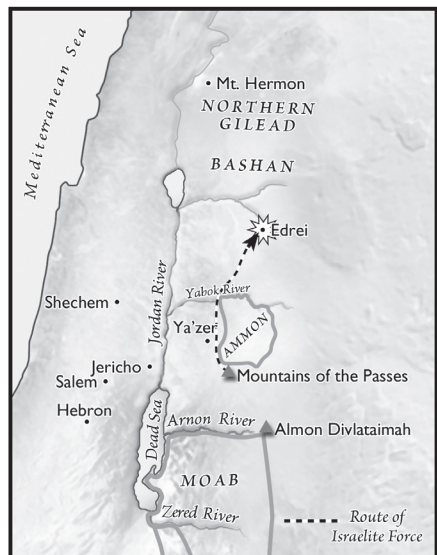


Figure 11: The Battle with Og

123. Below, 33:47. 124. Above, on v. 11. 125. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 2, p. 545. 126. Oxford manuscript of *Seder Olam Rabbah*, quoted in *Seder Olam Rabbah HaShalem*, p. 134. 127. Deuteronomy 3:8. 128. Genesis 14:13. 129. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 134-139. 130. *Berachot* 54b. 131. Deuteronomy 3:6-7.

Haftarah for Chukat

When *Chukat* and *Balak* are combined, the following *haftarah* is omitted and only the *haftarah* of *Balak* is read.

Judges 11:1-33

Parashat Chukat closes with the account of how the Jewish people conquered the land of Sichon and Og. Many years later, the king of Ammon challenged the Jews' right to this land. To legitimize their possession of it, the judge Yiftach reminded the Ammonites of this conquest.

11:1 Now, during the period of the judges, there was a man named Yiftach the Gileadite, who was a mighty man of valor. He was the son of a woman who had married out of her tribe, and since some people considered this disloyalty, she was called a harlot. As for his father, Gilead²³ begot Yiftach. 2 Gilead's other wife bore him sons. When his wife's sons grew up, they drove Yiftach out, and they said to him, "You shall not inherit in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman." 3 So Yiftach fled from his brothers and dwelt in the Land of Tov. There, idle men gathered around Yiftach and went out with him. 4 Many days later, the Ammonites made war with Israel.²⁴ 5 When the Ammonites fought with Israel, the elders of Gilead went to take Yiftach from the Land of Tov. 6 They said to Yiftach, "Come and become our chief, and we will fight with the Ammonites." 7 Yiftach said to his brothers, the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and drive me from my father's house? So why have you come to me now, when you are in distress?" 8 The elders of Gilead said to Yiftach, "It is for this reason that we have returned to you now: that you go with us and fight the Ammonites. You shall become a leader over us, over all the inhabitants of Gilead." 9 Yiftach said to the elders of Gilead, "If you bring me back to fight with the Ammonites, and God delivers them before me, I will become your leader." 10 The elders of Gilead said to Yiftach, "God hears the agreement made between us; He will bear witness if we do not do according to your word."

11:1 וַיִּפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי הָיָה גִבּוֹר חַיִּל וְהוּא
בֶּן־אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה וַיּוֹלֵד גִּלְעָד אֶת־יִפְתָּח:
2 וַתֵּלֶד אִשָּׁת־גִּלְעָד לוֹ בָּנִים וַיְגְדְלוּ בְנֵי־
הָאִשָּׁה וַיַּגְרִשׁוּ אֶת־יִפְתָּח וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ לֹא־
תִּנְחַל בְּבֵית־אֲבִינוּ כִּי בֶן־אִשָּׁה אַחֶרֶת
אָתָּה: 3 וַיְבָרַח יִפְתָּח מִפָּנָיו אַחֲיוֹ וַיֵּשֶׁב
בְּאֶרֶץ טוֹב וַיִּתְּלַקְטוּ אֶל־יִפְתָּח אַנְשִׁים
רִיקִים וַיֵּצְאוּ עִמּוֹ: 4 וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים וַיִּלְחֲמוּ
בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 5 וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר־
נִלְחֲמוּ בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְכוּ זָקְנֵי
גִלְעָד לִקְחַת אֶת־יִפְתָּח מֵאֶרֶץ טוֹב:
6 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְיִפְתָּח לָכֵה וְהָיִיתָ לָּנוּ לְקַצֵּץ
וְנִלְחֲמָה בְּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן: 7 וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח
לְזָקְנֵי גִלְעָד הֲלֹא אַתֶּם שָׂנֵאתֶם אוֹתִי
וְתִגְרֹשׁוּנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמִדּוֹעַ בְּאַתֶּם אֵלַי
עַתָּה כַּאֲשֶׁר צֵר לָכֶם: 8 וַיֹּאמְרוּ זָקְנֵי
גִלְעָד אֶל־יִפְתָּח לָכֵן עַתָּה שָׁבְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ
וְהִלַּכְתָּ עִמָּנוּ וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בְּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיִיתָ
לָּנוּ לְרֹאשׁ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי גִלְעָד: 9 וַיֹּאמֶר
יִפְתָּח אֶל־זָקְנֵי גִלְעָד אִם־מְשִׁיבִים אַתֶּם
אוֹתִי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן וְנָתַן יְהוָה אוֹתָם
לְפָנַי אֲנִכִּי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לְרֹאשׁ: 10 וַיֹּאמְרוּ
זָקְנֵי־גִלְעָד אֶל־יִפְתָּח יְהוָה יְהִי שֹׁמֵעַ
בִּינוֹתֵינוּ אִם־לֹא כַּדְּבָרֶךָ כֵּן נַעֲשֶׂה:

23. This was not Gilead, the grandson of Manasseh, since he lived years prior to this. 24. As described immediately prior to this passage, in Judges 10:7-18.

11 Yiftach went with the elders of Gilead, and the people appointed him as leader and chief over them. Yiftach reiterated all the words of the stipulation he made with the elders before God in Mitzpah, where the Israelites were encamped against the Ammonites.²⁵ Yiftach was sure that God witnessed the pact inasmuch as His presence resides wherever there is a multitude of Jews. 12 Yiftach then sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, saying, "What quarrel is there between me and you, that you have come to me to fight in my land?" 13 The king of the Ammonites said to the messengers of Yiftach, "Because Israel took away my land, when they came out of Egypt, from the Arnon River northward up to the Yabok River, and westward up to the Jordan; and now restore them peacefully." 14 Yiftach continued, and sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites. 15 He said to him, "So said Yiftach, Israel did not take either the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites. 16 Because when they came up from Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness up to the east arm of the Sea of Reeds, and they came to Kadesh, at the border of the kingdom of Edom. 17 Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom saying, 'Let me pass now through your land' to enter the Land of Canaan, but the king of Edom did not listen. Israel also sent messengers with the same message to the king of Moab, and he, too, was unwilling to let them pass through their land. So Israel stayed in Kadesh. 18 They went through the wilderness, and went around the Land of Edom and the Land of Moab from the south, and after they turned northward, they came to the east of the Land of Moab, and they encamped on the other, northern side of the Arnon. They did not come within the border of Moab, for the Arnon River was the northern border of Moab. 19 Israel then sent messengers to Sichon, king of the Amorites, the king of Cheshbon. Israel said to him, 'Please let us pass through your land up to my place.' 20 Sichon did not trust Israel to pass through his border, and Sichon gathered all his people, and they encamped in Yachatz, and he fought with Israel.

11 וַיֵּלֶךְ יִפְתָּח עִם־זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד וַיַּשְׁמִימוּ
הָעָם אוֹתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם לְרֹאשׁ וּלְקָצִין
וַיְדַבֵּר יִפְתָּח אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרָיו לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
בְּמִצְפָּה: 12 וַיִּשְׁלַח יִפְתָּח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־
מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן לֵאמֹר מִה־לִּי וְלָךְ כִּי־
בָאת אֵלַי לְהִלָּחֵם בָּאֲרָצִי: 13 וַיֹּאמְרוּ
מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן אֶל־מַלְאָכָיו יִפְתָּח
כִּי־לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־אֲרָצִי בְּעִלּוֹתָיו
מִמִּצְרַיִם מֵאֲרָנוֹן וְעַד־הַיַּבֵּק וְעַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן
וְעַתָּה הַשִּׁיבָה אֶתְּהֶן בְּשָׁלוֹם: 14 וַיֹּסֶף
עוֹד יִפְתָּח וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ
בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה אָמַר יִפְתָּח
לֹא־לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־אֲרָץ מוֹאָב וְאֶת־
אֲרָץ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: 16 כִּי בְּעִלּוֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם
וַיֵּלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבָּר עַד־יַם־סוּף וַיָּבֹא
קָדֵשׁ: 17 וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מַלְאָכִים
אֶל־מֶלֶךְ אֱדוֹם לֵאמֹר אֶעֱבְרָה־נָּא
בְּאֲרָצְךָ וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ אֱדוֹם וְגַם אֶל־
מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב שָׁלַח וְלֹא אָבָה וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּקָדֵשׁ: 18 וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּמִדְבָּר וַיִּסָּב אֶת־אֲרָץ
אֱדוֹם וְאֶת־אֲרָץ מוֹאָב וַיָּבֹא מִמִּזְרַח־
שֶׁמֶשׁ לְאֲרָץ מוֹאָב וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעֵבֶר אֲרָנוֹן
וְלֹא־בָאוּ בְּגִבּוֹל מוֹאָב כִּי אֲרָנוֹן גְּבוּל
מוֹאָב: 19 וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מַלְאָכִים
אֶל־סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ־הָאֱמֹרִי מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבוֹן
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶעֱבְרָה־נָּא בְּאֲרָצְךָ
עַד־מְקוֹמִי: 20 וְלֹא־הֶאֱמִין סִיחֹן אֶת־
יִשְׂרָאֵל עָבַר בְּגִבּוֹלוֹ וַיֵּאסֹף סִיחֹן אֶת־
כָּל־עַמּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ בִּיהַצָּה וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

25. Judges 10:17.

21 God, the God of Israel, delivered Sichon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they struck them; and Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that land. 22 They possessed all the territory within the border of the Amorites, from the Arnon northward up to the Yabok, and westward from the wilderness up to the Jordan. So, you see, it is the land of Sichon that we conquered, not the land of Moab and Ammon. Moab and Ammon lost whatever rights they had to this land when Sichon conquered it from them.²⁶ 23 Now God, the God of Israel, has driven out the Amorites from before His people Israel, and you want to possess it? 24 Surely, that which Chemosh, your god, gives you to possess, you may possess, and all that which God, our God, has driven out from before us, we shall possess. 25 Now, are you any better than Balak the son of Tzipor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive with Israel, or did he ever fight against them? 26 When Israel dwelt in Cheshbon and its towns, and in Aroer and its towns, and in all the cities that are along Arnon, for the past three hundred years, since the days of Joshua—why did you not attempt to recover them during that time? These were originally Moabite towns, but no Moabite king ever contested our right to them since we conquered them from Sichon, who had conquered them from Moab. 27 I have not sinned against you; rather, you do wrong with me by fighting against me. May God, the true Judge, decide this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.” 28 The king of

the Ammonites did not listen to the words of Yiftach, which he had sent him. 29 A spirit of God descended upon Yiftach, so he took his troops and passed through the regions of Gilead and Manasseh, and he passed through Mitzpeh of Gilead, and from Mitzpeh of Gilead he passed over to the Ammonites. 30 Before attacking them, Yiftach vowed a vow to God, and said, “If You will indeed deliver the Ammonites into my hand,

21 וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־סִיחֹן וְאֶת־כָּל־עַמּוֹ בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּכּוּם וַיִּירֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ הָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב הָאֶרֶץ הַהִיא: 22 וַיִּירְשׁוּ אֶת כָּל־גְּבוּל הָאֱמֹרִי מֵאֲרֹנוֹן וְעַד־הַיַּבֹּק וּמִן־הַמִּדְבָּר וְעַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן: 23 וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי מִפְּנֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַתָּה תִירָשֶׁנּוּ: 24 הֲלֹא אֵת אֲשֶׁר יוֹרִישְׁךָ כְּמוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אוֹתוֹ תִירֶשׁ וְאַתָּה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ אוֹתוֹ תִירֶשׁ: 25 וְעַתָּה הַטּוֹב טוֹב אַתָּה מִבָּלָק בֶּן־צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב הָרוֹב רַב עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־נִלְחָם נִלְחָם בָּם: 26 בְּשֶׁבֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן וּבְבִנְיֹתֶיהָ וּבְעֶרְעוֹר וּבְבִנְיֹתֶיהָ וּבְכָל־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־יַד־יְאֲרֹנוֹן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וּמִדּוֹעַ לֹא־הִצַּלְתֶּם בָּעֵת הַהִיא: 27 וְאַנְכִּי לֹא־חָטָאתִי לָךְ וְאַתָּה עֲשֵׂה אֵתִי רָעָה לְהִלָּחֵם בִּי יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה הַשֹּׁפֵט הַיּוֹם בֵּין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: 28 וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן אֶל־דְּבָרֵי יִפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח אֵלָיו: 29 וַתְּהִי עַל־יִפְתָּח רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־הַגִּלְעָד וְאֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־מִצְפֵּה גִלְעָד וּמִמִּצְפֵּה גִלְעָד עָבַר בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: 30 וַיִּדָּר יִפְתָּח גִּדְּרָה לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נָתַן תִּתֵּן אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בְּיָדִי:

26. See on Numbers 21:26-30.

31 then it will be that whatever comes forth from the doors of my house toward me when I return in peace from the Ammonites, shall belong to God, and I will offer it up for an ascent-offering." 32 Yiftach passed over to the Ammonites to fight against them, and God delivered them into his hand. 33 He struck them from Aroer until you come to Minit; this area included twenty cities. He continued up to the Plain of the Vineyards, a very great slaughter. Thus, the Ammonites were subdued before the Israelites.

31 וְהָיָה הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדִּלְתֵּי בֵּיתִי
לְקִרְאָתִי בְּשׁוּבִי בְּשָׁלוֹם מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן
וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהָעֲלִיתִהוּ עֹלָה: 32 וַיַּעֲבֹר
יִפְתָּח אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְהִלָּחֶם בָּם וַיְהִינֶם
יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ: 33 וַיַּכֵּם מֵעֲרוֹעֵר וְעַד־בְּאֵר
מִנִּית עֲשָׂרִים עִיר וְעַד אֲבֵל כְּרָמִים מִכָּה
גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד וַיִּכְנְעוּ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל:



Dedicated in honor of our children

**Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways
of our holy Torah*

Yuri and Deana Pikover

