

INCOMPREHENSIBLE BUT DEFENSIBLE



YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Chukas

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Intensity off a Jewish Soul to Deflect the Nether Forces

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Contamination Rooted in the Torah is Unfathomable

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Deepening the Impact of Their Loss

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Why is the Claim Against Moshe?

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Indiscriminate Kindness Transitions Into Worthiness

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1. When Moshe drew water from the rock in the 40th year it was not only for the people but even for the livestock.
2. Midrash: G-d providing water even for livestock indicates that He is concerned for the possessions of the Jews.
3. The water ceased to flow in the fortieth year when Miriam passed away.
4. Until the 40th year the wellspring gave forth sufficient water even for the livestock indicating that G-d is concerned for the possessions of the Jews.
5. If this is so, why is G-d's consideration only displayed in the fortieth year?
6. Shelah Hakadosh: The Exodus From Egypt was due to G-d's indiscriminate kindness.
7. The Jews in Egypt were not worthy of redemption because they were pagans.
8. G-d employed his attribute of Chesed. The emergence of a Jewish People was the equivalent of creation.
9. A new existence was about to begin.
10. Psalms: The world was built on Chesed.
11. G-d had no reason to create existence other than His attribute of Chesed.
12. When the Jews left Egypt, all amenities to exist were provided including water for their livestock.
13. However, the 40th year when the water ceased to flow & then was reinstated, providing sufficient water for the livestock shows G-d's concern for their possessions.

An Enigma Elicits Universal Derision

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1. The law of the Red Heifer is classified as a statute.
2. It is a law that can not be understood within a rational context.
3. An example of this would be dietary laws and the prohibition to wear a combination of wool & linen.
4. Every level of spiritual contamination is relieved when immersing oneself in a mikvah.
5. To be relieved of the contamination of the dead one must undergo the ritual of the Red Heifer.
6. The Red Heifer with all its details and application is referred to as the (ultimate) statute.
7. Rashi: "It is my decree you are not permitted to reflect upon it.
8. Satan and the nations deride the Jewish People by saying, "What is this all about?"
9. King Solomon, the wisest of all men, says although he understands all statutes, the statute of the Red Heifer is beyond him.
10. It is inherently enigmatic: it purifies the contaminated and contaminates the pure.
11. There are other statutes that have a semblance of this and we are aggrieved because of this.
12. The derision is not rooted in the statutory nature of the law, but rather the contradictory factor.

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Approbation Seen As Condemnation

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1. Miriam was not eulogized when she passed away.
2. Kli Yakar: G-d caused the wellspring to cease so that they should understand that the wellspring was in her merit.
3. The water ceasing to flow was G-d's eulogy to Miriam.
4. How did they not appreciate who Miriam was?
5. Miriam, a Prophetess, was a midwife who defied Pharaoh & sang the Song of the Sea with the women.
6. When she spoke critically of Moshe she became a leper.
7. A leper, after recovering, remains outside of all the camps for seven days.
8. Midrash: The Divine Presence, Hashem, the Clouds of Glory, 600,000 men above the age of 20 – waited 7 days for Miriam to return.
9. The Jewish People's perception of G-d's dictate was to disgrace Miriam.
10. If G-d did not want to disgrace her – they would have traveled, unaware of Miriam's predicament.
11. G-d, by withholding the water, revealed that the wellspring was in her merit; their perception of Miriam was jaundiced.
12. Though embarrassed, nevertheless she is the model for all to understand the severity of negative speech.
13. It is a positive commandment to remember what G-d had done to Miriam.

Associations Determine Standards Of Evaluation

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1. When the Jewish People approached the Edomite border G-d said to Moshe, "Your brother Aaron will pass away."
2. Rashi: "When The Jews attached themselves to Esav, the evil one, their actions were breached."
3. If the association with Edomite precipitated sinful behavior it is understandable.
4. There is no mention of sin; Jews were not minimized– why should Aaron die?
5. G-d rewards the evil in this world for their good deeds so they should go into the oblivion when they pass on.
6. The domain of the nations is the physical world; the world to come is the domain of the Jew.
7. The Edomites, the counterforce to the Jew, were blessed by their forefather, Yitzchok, to have great wealth.
8. In essence, their empowered material state is the application of the attribute of Justice.
9. When the attribute of Justice is in place, the evaluation of deeds is exacting to the degree of perfection.
10. The devout are not sufficiently righteous.
11. When the Jewish People were in the proximity of Esav, the evil, they were in the area of the attribute of Justice – causing their actions to be breached.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Chukas



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Sensing Truth and Choosing to Reject it

First verse of the *Shema*: “You shall love *Hashem* your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources...” One has the obligation to love G-d with all of his heart.

Mishna: “All your heart” means that one must love G-d with both inclinations. There are times that one can even utilize the evil inclination to express one’s love for G-d. As we see, *Pinchas* reacted to the desecration of G-d’s Name with a vengeance when he acted zealously on behalf of G-d. The killing of *Zimri* together with the Midianite Princess *Cozbi* was done in a manner that can be construed as extreme cruelty; however, it was seen by G-d as the ultimate sanctification of His Name. “With all your resources” means that one must demonstrate his love for G-d with all of his assets, despite the cost factor.

One is continuously challenged with the choice to utilize G-d’s given endowments for the good or for evil. One’s belongings as well as one’s ability and intellect

are merely Divine endowments that can be used to advance one’s spirituality or to diminish it. *Chazal* depict *Korach* as one who was “wise.” He was endowed with great ability. How did he utilize that ability?

Midrash: *Korach* demonstrated his unique intellect by drawing in and influencing others to bring about the downfall of *Moshe*. “*Moshe* entered into his tent to explain that the appointment of *Aaron* as High Priest was Divine and not his own choice. He attempted to reason with *Korach* and explain that his claim was baseless. *Korach* thought to himself, ‘*Moshe* is very wise. He is far wiser than I. If I allow myself to enter into a dialogue with him, he will refute my position and I will be forced to accept his authority. It is better that I should remain silent and maintain my perception of *Moshe*.’ When *Moshe* saw that there was no point in pursuing a dialogue with *Korach*, he left his tent.”

Korach understood that *Moshe* would convince him with certainty that his position was false; however, he did not

want to be proven that his mindset was a manifestation of his ego. He was so driven by ego and riddled with jealousy that he could not bear to be excluded from a position of leadership. He applied his intellect to perpetrate evil.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: “Who is the wise man? It is the one who foresees the future.” *Korach* was only able to foresee that *Shmuel* the Prophet was to be his descendant, thus empowering him to continue his mutiny.

Chazal: *Korach* was mistaken because “his eye misled him.” He utilized the principle of seeing the future to his own detriment and destruction. Very often one does not want to reflect upon something that he wants to do because he senses that by doing so, he would not be able to follow-through with his desire. At that moment, he does not appreciate the severity of the consequence of his actions. If one would see the outcome of his behavior, one would never sin.

Ramchal in Path of the Just: The strategy of the evil inclination is similar to that of Pharaoh who had enslaved the Jewish people. When the Jewish people ceased to work, because they had believed that the redemption was imminent with the coming of *Moshe*, Pharaoh withdrew their straw subsidy. He had demanded that they must meet the same quota of bricks although they must provide their own straw. They complained to Pharaoh, “How are we to meet your demands and provide our own straw?” He replied, “It is clear that your capacity is greater than your performance. You have been lazy. If you had been fully occupied with your enslavement you would not have time to complain.”

Pharaoh had taken away the time that the Jewish people could have reflected upon their situation, thus quelling the work stoppage. G-d endows the individual with sufficient wisdom to be able to reflect in order to evaluate his own actions – whether they are right or wrong. If one were to take the time to make this evaluation, one would not sin, appreciating its wrongness and consequences. However, the evil inclination by distracting the individual and occupying his mind with many things, it does not allow him to reflect sufficiently upon his actions. This will cause the individual to eventually stray from the path of good.

Addressing the Machinations of the Evil Inclination

Torah: The service of the red heifer will cause the one who had been contaminated by the dead to become

pure and the one engages in its process to become contaminated. This is clearly enigmatic because it is a contradiction in its essence. How can a process that brings about purity by relieving one of the most intense level of impurity, simultaneously cause impurity?

Midrash: “There are four areas of *Torah* in which the evil inclination comes to refute. In every one of these areas, the word ‘Statute’ is associated with the law. A Statute is a law that cannot be understood on a rational level. It is something that the human faculty cannot fathom. These are the four areas: the prohibition to marry the wife of one’s brother (after being widowed or divorced), the combination of wool and linen (*shatnez*), the goat that is thrown down the mountainside on *Yom Kippur* (for the atonement of the Jewish people), and the red heifer.

“Regarding the wife of one’s brother the *Torah* considers it as one of the incestuous relations. However, the *Torah* states if one’s brother dies childless then there is a *mitzvah* to marry the wife of the deceased brother, thus fulfilling the obligation of levirate marriage. As it states, ‘You should heed My Statutes and My Laws...’ Regarding the combination of wool and linen the *Torah* tells us that it is forbidden to wear; however if one wears a four cornered garment that is made of linen, one attaches upon it fringes (*tzitzis*) although they are made of wool.

“The *Torah* once again states, ‘My Statutes you should heed...’ Regarding the goat that is thrown down the mountain on *Yom Kippur*, the *Torah* tells us that one who takes the goat into the desert for this ritual becomes contaminated. However, it brings about spiritual atonement for the Jewish people (it brings about purity). It states, ‘This shall be a Statute for you forever...’

“Regarding the red heifer, all those who were involved in its process (from beginning until the end) becomes contaminated while the one who is contaminated becomes pure. As it is states, ‘This is the Statute of the *Torah*...’” By referring to each of these four areas as “Statutes” the *Torah* is indicating that they are concepts that cannot be fathomed by the human mind and thus must be accepted without any question.

The *Midrash* only mentions four areas in which the evil inclination attempts to refute; however, there are other laws that clearly fall under the category of “Statutes” because they cannot be rationally understood. For example, a woman who has given birth to either a male or female child is considered contaminated due to the

flow of blood for one week or two weeks respectively. If, however, she continues to have a flow, if it is a male, she is permitted to her husband for thirty-three days. If it is a female, she is permitted to her husband for sixty-six days. How can this be understood?

If the initial flow emanates from the same source, the uterus, which is contaminating, why should the flow at the later time not cause the same contamination—thus restricting the husband from his wife? The reason the evil inclination does not choose to refute this law and thus the *Torah* does not respond by classifying it as a “Statute” is because it is not absolutely clear that the blood that flows during the later periods emanates from the same source as the earlier flow. This is discussed in the *Gemara* in Tractate *Niddah*.

Torah regarding the red heifer: “This is the Statute of the *Torah*...”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: One is not even permitted to reflect upon the difficulty of the understanding of the law.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos* citing a verse from Psalms, “Be incensed (intolerant) and you will not sin.” One’s positive inclination must be intolerant of the evil inclination. Only then, one will not come to sin. Whenever one is in a continuous intolerant state regarding the suggestions and machinations of the evil inclination, one will not sin.

The areas in the *Torah* that are considered to be “Statutes” because of their inner contradictions, should not even be reflected upon because if one is confounded with the contradiction, it will give cause for the evil inclination to erode one’s observance. Although one understands that the law itself is incomprehensible, because of its inner contradiction, and it is therefore classified as “Statute”; nevertheless, reflecting upon it is another matter. If one is bothered by the difficulty of the question, one will seek an answer which cannot be found.

The Connection of the Jewish People to the Infinite

Midrash: “The verse states, ‘Take to you....’ *Reb Yosi Ben Reb Chanina* said, ‘G-d said to *Moshe*, ‘I will reveal to you the understanding of the red heifer (*parah adumah*) for the others it will remain a Statute that cannot be fathomed. (King Solomon, who was the wisest man to ever live said that the understanding of the red heifer was ‘distant from me’).”

Torah regarding the laws of the red heifer: “This is the Statute of the *Torah*, which *Hashem* has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a completely red cow...”

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: “If the *Torah* is going to present the laws that pertain to spiritual contamination and purity, should it not have referred to the process as, ‘This is the statute of spiritual contamination or purity...’? Why does the *Torah* state, ‘This is the Statute of the *Torah*...?’ Evidently, the Statute of the red heifer is related to the *Torah* itself.”

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The law states that one is not permitted to partake of the Pascal sacrifice if one is contaminated; however, in Egypt G-d commanded the Jewish people to partake of the sacrifice without needing to undergo any purification. This is because at that time, the laws of spiritual contamination and purity did not have relevance to them. Before receiving the *Torah* at Sinai, the Jewish people were considered to be “*Bnei Noach*.” They had not yet entered into the covenant with G-d to become His Holy nation and thus were no different from the non-Jew who has no relevance to spiritual purity and contamination.

Torah: “This is the Statute of the *Torah*...” regarding the red heifer to indicate that the basis of the spiritual purity/contamination of the Jew is the *Torah* itself. Only a Jew is susceptible to any type of spiritual contamination. If a non-Jew comes in contact with the remains of a human being, he will not become contaminated. In addition, the spiritual contamination that emanates from the remains of a non-Jew is not as pervasive as that of a Jew. The remains of a non-Jew only contaminate upon contact, whereas, the remains of a Jew not only contaminate upon contact but also through exposure from being under the same roof or enclosure (*ohel*).

Ohr HaChaim: The reason for this is a fundamental difference between the soul of the Jew and the non-Jew. When one empties a vessel that had contained honey, there remains a residue of the contents on the walls of that vessel. This immediately attracts insects and rodents.

Similarly, when the Jewish soul departs from the body, because it has been the receptacle for the Jewish soul, there remains a spiritual residue associated with the body. This intense, spiritual residue attracts various nether forces, which feed upon it as their life source. It is this phenomenon that causes the strong spiritual impurity associated with the departure of the Jewish soul. The non-Jew has no relevance to this.

Before the Sinai experience when the Jewish people received the *Torah* and became “G-d’s chosen people,” there was no difference in the spiritual make up between the Jew and the nations of the world. When the Jewish people became G-d’s Priestly, Holy Nation at Sinai they became bound to G-d.

Zohar: “The Jewish people, the *Torah*, and The Holy One blessed be He are one,” meaning that the Jewish people are intertwined with G-d Himself through the *Torah* which unites them. This is similar to one grafting a branch to a tree. If the graft is done properly, the branch becomes part of the tree. So too the Jewish people became connected to the Infinite Being at Sinai through the receiving of the *Torah*. Thus, the way a Jew roots himself to G-d is through engaging in the *Torah* which is the source of his spiritual nourishment.

The Compatibility of the Jew to the Torah Itself

Torah in *Chukas*: Regarding the *mitzvah* of the Red Heifer, “*Zos Chukas ha’Torah adam ki yamus b’ohel...* This is the Statute of *Torah*, (when) a man dies in the tent...” The ritual of the Red Heifer purifies the one who is spiritually contaminated and causes the one who is pure to become impure. This *mitzvah* is the ultimate Statute. Its infrastructure can only be understood by the Divine. King Solomon, who was the wisest man to ever live was not able to comprehend the rationale of the Red Heifer, although he was able to understand the rationale for all of the other statutes. Regarding the Red Heifer he said, “It is beyond me...” What is innate in this statute that causes it to be unfathomable?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: “Why does the *Torah* refer to the statute as ‘the statute of the *Torah*’ rather than the statute of purity or impurity?” He explains that before the Jewish people left Egypt, G-d commanded them to bring a Pascal Sacrifice (*Korban Pesach*). If one is spiritually contaminated, he is not qualified to participate in the consumption of sacrificial meat. There is no mention, before the Jewish people had left Egypt, that they needed to purify themselves before engaging in the Pascal Sacrifice. When the Jewish people were in Egypt, their classification was “Noahide.” They did not assume the status as Jews until after the *Torah* was given at Sinai.

A gentile/Noahide is not susceptible to spiritual contamination. These laws only pertain to an individual who is a Jew. As a result of receiving the *Torah* at Sinai, the

Jewish people had ascended to a spiritual level that allowed them to have relevance to the infinite. Because their spirituality was expanded and transformed they were thus susceptible to spiritual contamination. It was the Jewish people’s relevance to the *Torah* itself that caused them to be susceptible to spiritual contamination and thus requiring them to attain spiritual purity through the Red Heifer. In essence, when the *Torah* states, “This is the Statute of the *Torah*” it is telling us that this particular Statute is a direct consequence of what had transpired at Sinai.

Gemara in Tractate *Chagiga*: A gentile who engages in *Torah* study is liable for the death penalty. It is because the *Torah* is considered to be the “betrothed” of *Yaakov*. As the *Torah* states, “The *Torah* was commanded by *Moshe*. It is the “*morashah* (heritage)” of *Yaakov*...”

Gemara: The word should not be read “*morasha*” but rather “*me’orasa*” which means, “betrothed.” When a gentile engages in *Torah* study, it is the equivalent of engaging with another’s betrothed, which is considered adultery. Only the Jewish people, because of their dimension of spirituality were qualified to receive the *Torah* from G-d. Their souls had the ability to ascend to this special level because they descended from the holy Patriarchs *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*.

Eyov: “The *Torah* is longer than the earth and broader than the ocean.” Since *Torah* is a manifestation of G-d’s Wisdom, it is infinite. The spirituality of the Jew is compatible to the spirituality of the *Torah*. It is because of this that the Jew can only perfect his soul through the observance of the 613 *mitzvos* of the *Torah*. The ultimate objective of one perfecting his spirituality is to be able to cleave to G-d, Who is Infinite.

Mishna in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: “Every Jew has a share in the world to come.” This based on what had transpired at Sinai. The only relevance of the Jew to eternity is through the observance of the *Torah* itself. We are also able to understand what is stated in the *Mishna* in *Ethics of our Fathers*, “There is no reward for a *mitzvah* in this world.”

It is because the effect of performing a *mitzvah* is on an eternal plane. Therefore the reward cannot be given within a finite and limited context, which is physical existence. Since the purification process of the Red Heifer is rooted in the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish soul, which corresponds to all aspects of the *Torah*, the rationale of this *mitzvah* cannot be fathomed, even by King Solomon. It is because of this that he said, “It is beyond me....”

Good Fortune is not Necessarily What is Seen by the Eye

Torah: “They journeyed from *Kadesh* and the Children of Israel arrived - the entire assembly - at Mount Hor. *Hashem* said to *Moshe* and *Aaron* at Mount Hor by the border of the land of *Edom*, saying, ‘*Aaron* shall be gathered to his people (pass away), for he shall not enter the Land...’” Why does the *Torah* need to mention the border of *Edom* in association with the passing of *Aaron*?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “From here we see that because they had attached themselves and had become close to *Esav* the evil one, their actions were breached and thus they had lost this *tzaddik* (*Aaron*). When one attaches/associates himself with an evil person (*rasha*), one enters into a precarious state.” Seemingly, the circumstances which caused the demise of *Aaron* are not to be understood. There is no indication that as a result of being in the proximity of *Edom* that the Jewish people had failed spiritually to any degree. If so, why were their actions considered to be “breached?” Why are they in need of atonement, thus causing the *tzaddik* to be taken?

The Attribute of Justice is exacting to the ultimate degree. Unless one’s record is perfect, one cannot withstand the scrutiny of the Attribute of Justice. When one performs a *mitzvah*, although may have been meticulously executed with proper intent, most often it is only accepted by G-d because it is evaluated within the context of the Attribute of Mercy.

King Solomon in *Ecclesiastes*: “There is no *tzaddik* in the land who does good and does not sin.” The Attribute of Mercy allows the spiritual accomplishments of the Jewish people to not only be accepted by G-d, but also to be embraced by Him. However, if they were to be subject to the scrutiny of the Attribute of Justice they would have been rejected.

Chazal: *Yaakov*, our Patriarch and his brother *Esav* had divided existence between them. *Yaakov* had taken for himself the spiritual world and *Esav* had taken the physical. *Yaakov* told *Esav* that he was no interest in

the physical world for its own sake, but rather only as a means to a spiritual end. In contrast, the physical world was the location in which *Esav* wanted to receive his reward because he had no interest in the spiritual.

Torah: If an evil person performs some good deed, albeit minor and minuscule, he is rewarded in this world because he has no relevance to the spiritual world to come. The reward for the *mitzvos* and good deeds of the Jewish people is reserved for the world to come (eternity).

Mishna in *Ethics of our Fathers*: “There is no reward for a *mitzvah* in this world.” Although *Esav* thrives and is empowered in this existence, his overwhelming bounty, which seems to be the ultimate in success, is in fact the basis for his destruction. In essence, it is the most level of Justice that is being meted out to him. After the evil person dies, he goes into spiritual oblivion, which is a state of unending suffering, and receives no reward in the world to come.

The Edomites, who are the descendants of *Esav* were continuously under the jurisdiction of the Attribute of Justice because of their lack of relevance to the spiritual. When the Jewish people passed within the proximity of the border of the Edomites, they were in effect exposed to a location that was under the jurisdiction of the Attribute of Justice. The manifestation of this Attribute for the Jew and the Edomite expresses itself differently.

For the Edomite, it is the ultimate level of material bounty and power. For the Jew, it means that his record will be scrutinized to the ultimate degree. The spiritual record of the Jew that was initially seen as exemplary under the Attribute of Mercy, will be seen as deficient under the Attribute of Justice. This new level of scrutiny brought about intense prosecution against the Jewish people. Therefore, G-d took the *tzaddik*, *Aaron* as an atonement for them. As *Chazal* tell us, “The passing of a *tzaddik* is an atonement for the Jewish people.”



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