

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 40

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CHUKAT

1st Tammuz 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 19, verses 1 - 17

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe and Aaron to explain the purification function of a Red Heifer.
- ✚ A free ranged, unblemished red cow is given to Elazar the Kohen for slaughter. Elazar then sprinkles its blood seven times towards the Mishkan (tabernacle) before completely burning the carcass on the Altar.
- ✚ A pure person gathers up the ashes and places them in a designated place for safekeeping. Both he and the one who burned the heifer are now considered Tamei (Impure) and must immerse themselves along with their clothing in a Mikveh and wait until evening to become Tahor (pure) once more.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 19, verse 18 - 23 Chapter 20, verse 6

- ✚ The red heifer's ashes are mixed with water and are sprinkled over anyone who has been in contact with a human corpse in order to become pure again.
- ✚ Miriam passes away in the fortieth year of Bnai Yisrael's sojourn in the Midbar (desert).
- ✚ The water which flowed miraculously to quench Bnai Yisrael's thirst in Miriam's honour dried up and the people confront Moshe, complaining about the lack of water.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 20, verses 7 - 13

- ✚ Hashem instructs Moshe to take his staff, gather Aaron and the people and speak to the rock to resume the flow of water once more.
- ✚ Instead of talking to the rock, Moshe lifts up his staff and strikes it twice. Water pours out of the rock and everyone, including their animals gets enough to drink.
- ✚ For disobeying Hashem command Moshe and Aaron are barred from leading the people into the promised land of Israel.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 20, verses 14 - 21

- ✚ Moshe sends out messengers to the king of Edom asking permission to pass through his land.
- ✚ The King went out to meet Moshe armed with a large contingent of soldiers, refusing entry.
- ✚ Left with no choice, Bnai Yisrael circumvent Edom and approach the land of Canaan from the east.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 20, verse 22 - Chapter 21, verse 9

- ✚ Upon arriving at Mount Hor. Hashem orders Moshe, Aaron and Aaron's son Elazar to go ascend the mountain.
- ✚ Aaron removes his priestly garments and dresses Elazar in them, making him the new Kohen Gadol.
- ✚ Aaron dies and the whole of Bnai Yisrael mourn him for thirty days.
- ✚ Amalek disguised as Canaanites launch an attack on Bnai Yisrael, so they prayed to Hashem and were victorious.
- ✚ Bnai Yisrael become frustrated and start complaining about the Mann they are eating. Hashem sent venomous snakes to bite the people, the nation cries out admitting their sins. Moshe fashions a copper serpent wrapped around a pole and whoever looked at it were cured. However many died.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 21, verses 10 – 20 and

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 21, verse 21 - Chapter 22, verse 1

- ✚ Bnai Israel continue their journey towards the eastern bank of the river Jordan. Moshe sends messengers to the king of the Amorites, Sihon, requesting permission to cross his land; but Sihon sends his troops to attack Bnai Yisrael instead and is defeated.
- ✚ Og, king of Bashan along with his army also attack and are destroyed as well.

Maftir – Bamidbar, Chapter 28 Verses 9 – 15

- ✚ The Korbonos (Sacrifices) which are required to be offered up to Hashem on Rosh Chodesh during the times when the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash stood are discussed here.

Haftorah – Yishayah (Isaiah), Chapter 66, Verses 1 – 25

- ✚ Yishayah describes the ultimate downfall of all our enemies during the war of Gog and Magog. The Navi forewarns that insincere expressions of devotion are synonymous to those who offer up blemished korbonos (sacrifices) to Hashem for because of this lack of sincerity and devotion, will be ultimately punished for it.
- ✚ Nevertheless, Yishayah's message, those who truly mourn for the absence of the Bais Hamikdash will merit and rejoice in its future redemption and reconstruction and will once again be able to witness the Rosh Chodesh offering and service, and fully participate in expressing their devotion and commitment to Hashem.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ Yishayah explains that this world is the manifestation of Hashem's presence and glory. Yet, we are incapable and sometimes unwilling to properly recognize his visible presence.
- ✚ In this week's sedra, Even though during the whole time in the Midbar (desert) Bnai Yisrael, witnessed countless of miracles daily, they failed to appreciate their opportunity to be close to Hashem, be thankful and serve Him correctly.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: Why was a copper serpent used to save the people?

Throughout the time Bnai Yisrael left Mitzraim (Egypt), Hashem was constantly teaching them, the best and appropriate way of serving Him. Hashem began with revealing Himself personally at Mount Sinai handing over his beloved torah for mankind to follow.

Forty years had now passed and two of their greatest leaders Miriam and Aaron had passed away, Bnai Yisrael became very discouraged, and in their despair forgot the reason that it was because of their previous generation sin of listening to the Meraglim (spies) report and disbelieving Moshe and Hashem, which caused them to be in the situation they were facing now; and not living the torah way of life in the promised land. Yet, just like their Generation before them, they erred again and complained about the one thing that had sustained them throughout the whole wandering in the Midbar (desert). The Mann. As a result of this sin, Hashem sent poisonous serpents into the camp, and the people began to die. When Moses prayed on Bnai Yisrael's behalf, Hashem instructed him to make a copper serpent and put it on a pole so the people could see it and become healed.

I felt at first, the fact that snakes were sent for complaining about their food seems a bit strange, but healing them with a copper snake which has a suspicious resemblance to an idol is bizarre as I know idolatry is one of the primary commandments forbidden in the Torah. Couldn't they just have wholeheartedly asked for Teshuva (forgiveness) and offered up a Korban like they had done before instead?

I firmly believe the reason was this. Snakes were naturally found in the Midbar, and yet all the time while Bnai Yisrael were there, not one was seen. Why? Because Hashem had been protecting them for all those years. However when Bnai Yisrael expressed their lack of gratitude for His many blessings, Hashem removed all of his protections, and so the people got bitten. Hashem was teaching the people something about faith. It is totally illogical to think that looking at a copper image could heal anyone from a snakebite, but that is exactly what Hashem told them to do. It took an act of faith to become healed, and the serpent on the stick was a reminder of their sin which brought about their suffering.

