

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 60

**Chukat** | Self-Sacrifice



# MESILLOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha  
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,  
**Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita**

# ...**PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL**...

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### Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

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# Parashat Chukat

## Pay Me After Your Trial

**Rebbe** Mordechai Dov of Hornosteipel was accustomed to tell stories of tzaddikim to his chassidim, especially during Purim and Pesach night after the Seder. Many of the stories were about his father-in-law, Rebbe Chaim of Sanz.

**This** is one of those stories...

**Once**, a Jew from the city of Vienna who had no Jewish signs came to my father-in-law. He told my father-in-law that he had a criminal trial coming up and therefore came to the tzaddik to ask for help. My father-in-law blessed him that nothing bad would happen.

**That** didn't seem to satisfy him though. "But," said the Jew said to my father-in-law, "I thought that the rebbe would write a request to Hashem, and I would like to look at the letter to see if it is written correctly."

**The** Rebbe of Sanz smiled, "A request made to Hashem must be completely secret. No one is allowed to read it."

**The** Jew was satisfied and agreed that such things should remain completely secret.

**Then** the Jew asked how much he should pay the rebbe. "Nothing!" the rebbe replied.

**He** wouldn't give in, though, not wanting the rebbe to trouble himself without getting paid. "It will surely take a few hours for the rebbe to write the request!"

**Seeing** that the Jew wasn't going to budge, the Rebbe of Sanz told him, "After you are saved from your trial, send me 300 rubles."

**Three** days later, a check for 300 rubles arrived at the home of the rebbe...

**During** their initial conversation, one of the rebbe's chassidim

**Parashat Chukat - Miracle ?!**

stood next to him and heard the entire conversation. After the rebbe received the money, the chassid approached the rebbe and asked, "I've been waiting for salvation for months, but the rebbe doesn't help me, and here comes one simple Jew that has no sign of Judaism, and in an instant, he receives salvation from the rebbe ?!"

**The** rebbe glanced at his chassid and replied, "Do you think that I have miracles up my sleeve?" "When miracles are made, I endanger not only myself but also

my children. I'm willing to sacrifice myself to teach that poor Jew that there's a Creator of the world... Do I need to prove to you too that there's a Creator of the world...?"

**Such** stories were told about his father-in-law on various occasions...<sup>1</sup>

**Tzaddikim** always try to find the right way to give *complete* help to the Jew standing in front of them, no matter what is needed to do. In the same regard, we find in the writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe...<sup>2</sup>

**Miracle ?!**

**Sarah's** life wasn't simple. Shortly after marriage, she gave birth to a mute son, and not long after, her husband abandoned her... She lived with her difficult situation for many years, until one day she heard that there was a rabbi that performs miracles for people. That rabbi was the "Tzemach Tzedek" of Lubavitch.

**Sarah** arrived at the rebbe's home and told his assistant that she was an *aguna*<sup>3</sup> and wanted the rebbe to help her find her husband. The assistant replied, "Certainly, I'll bring you into the rebbe's room."

**Unfortunately**, the rebbe was busy at that moment, and she wasn't able to enter.

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

1. **Gedolei** Israel B'Yaldutam (Vol. 3, p. 54).
2. **Torat** Menachem - Hitvaaduyot 1 (p.34).

3. **A** woman bound in marriage by a husband who refuses to grant a *get* (a divorce document) or who is missing and not proved dead.

**Parashat Chukat - This Is The Decree Of The Torah**

**She** approached the wife of the Tzemach Tzedek, told her the story of why she came, and asked, “I want the rebbe to help me find my husband.” The Rabbanit replied, “Don’t worry, I’ll bring you into the Rebbe’s room.”

**But** yet again, she didn’t succeed in entering...

**The** assistant saw her pain and said to her, “Write a letter to the rebbe and give it to your son. I’ll make sure to bring him into the rebbe’s room when he’s not there, and when the rebbe arrives, your son will approach him and give him the letter.”

**She** listened to the assistant and did as he said. The rebbe entered the room, and the son approached him and handed him the letter...

**The** eyes of the Tzemach Tzedek blazed with anger at the situation. He looked at the boy standing in front of him and said, “Go and tell your mother that your father is in the city of...”

**The** son returned to his mother and told her the words of the rebbe... Sarah fainted. After she woke up, she burst into tears of joy. Her mute son started speaking...

**Sarah** went with her son and found her husband...

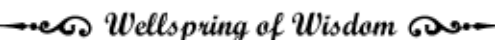
**The** assistant approached the Tzemach Tzedek and said with admiration, rebbe! What an amazing miracle, her son began to speak!”

**The** Tzemach Tzedek replied, “Miracle?! How was I supposed to know that her son was mute?!”

**This Is The Decree Of The Torah**

**In** 1224, one of the greatest *Baalei HaTosafot*, Rabbi Yehuda Shir-Leon,<sup>4</sup> passed away.

**His** disciple Rabbi Yechiel succeeded him as the Rosh Yeshiva. Rabbi Yechiel headed the



4. **His** Tosafot in Massechet Brachot is printed with the title “Tosafot Rabbi Yehuda HaChassid.”

## Parashat Chukat - This Is The Decree Of The Torah

yeshiva from 1224 until his immigration to Eretz Yisrael in 1259. During this period, the Jews of France witnessed many shocking events, the peak being the trial and burning of the Talmud!

**This** is what happened...

**One** of the students of Rabbi Yechiel's yeshiva was Nicholas Donin. Although he looked like everyone else, heresy was burning inside him. He didn't believe in the Oral Torah. When his heresy reached even greater levels, Rabbi Yechiel and his *Beit Din* (Rabbinical Court) expelled him from the congregation.

**For** about ten years, Nicholas Donin lived outside his community while still defining himself as a Jew. But, in 1235, he left Judaism for Christianity. His first public act as an apostate was to aid the Crusaders against Jews in the cities of Anjou and Brittany. This resulted in about 3,000 Jews being murdered and about 500 who were forced to convert.

**About** a year later, in 1236, Nicholas Donin wrote a hostile

manuscript against the Talmud. Between 1238-1239 he joined the Franciscan Order and began his pleads to Pope Gregory IX to ban Jews from studying the Talmud. He headed a group of apostates who formulated thirty-five accusations against the Talmud.

**The** pope acceded to him and sent a letter to the rulers of Western Europe, Spain, Portugal, France, and England with a demand... Collect all the books of the Talmud from the Jews, and bring them for review.

**The** pope's instructions were carried out on the appointed date of March 3, 1240, but only in Paris. The rulers of Spain and England knew how to evade instructions that came from Rome when it wasn't convenient for them...

**The** situation in France, where Louis IX, the oppressor of Am Israel who was highly influenced by priests of the church, ruled, was very different...

**A** short time later, a few Jewish sages were summoned to the king's palace in Paris for the "debate." A debate that was nothing but an

interrogation based on a 35-clause essay that Donin, who knew a thing or two in the Talmud, wrote. The summoning was done very suddenly in order that the rabbis wouldn't have time to prepare themselves...

**The** Jews and the Talmud were represented by four sages... Rabbi Yechiel, who was chosen to head the delegation, and with him, three *Baalei Tosafot*, Rabbi Moshe of Coucy, author of the "Smag," Rabbi Shmuel Bar Shlomo of Falaise, and Rabbi Yehuda bar David of Malon.

**In** response to Donin's attack, Rabbi Yechiel responded forcefully. Rabbi Yechiel's remarks left a strong impression on those present, and the church members found it difficult to rule against the Talmud, and as a result of which, the Jews had a quiet period, and even some of the confiscated books were returned to them.

**However**, in *shamayim* (heaven), it was decreed otherwise. Oppressors of Am Israel continued their activities, and years later, the king

declared the Talmud a dangerous book full of insults against Christianity that should be burned. The king's soldiers stormed the Jewish neighborhoods and collected every book of the Talmud...

**This** is how Rabbi Yechiel described it in his book...

**Since** we are engaged with learning the laws of fasting and matters of the burning of the Torah, we will write in remembrance of what happened in our generation, caused by our sins, that the Torah of Hashem was burned in the year 5004 from the creation of the world, on **Friday, Parashat Chukat**, about twenty-four carriages full of Talmudic, Halachic, and Aggadic books in France...<sup>5</sup>

**The** burning of the books caused a great shortage, and this inevitably led to a decrease in Torah study...

**The** rabbis in that generation requested to know what caused the decree, and they received an answer from *shamayim* as follows...

**Parashat Chukat - Equal To One-Hundred Thousand**

**Know**, that Friday of parashat Chukat caused it, and this is implied by Onkelos, who translated the words, 'זאת חקת התורה' (This is the statute of the Torah) (Bamidbar

19:2) as, 'דא גזרת אורייתא' (This is the decree of the Torah).

**To** understand the answer given to them, we'll have to preface... But first, a story...

**Equal To One-Hundred Thousand**

**The** time of Am Israel's final redemption is hidden from all. Nevertheless, we find that there have been sages that have revealed the time of redemption because they saw with *Ruach HaKodesh* that the time was fitting for the redemption of Israel.

**One** of the sages who revealed the time fitted for the coming of *Mashiach* was the holy *Tanna*, Rabbi Elazar ben Arach. He writes<sup>6</sup> that in the year 5408 from the creation of the world, there would be a great time of heavenly mercy fitting for the coming of *Mashiach*.

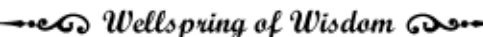
**On** erev Yom Kippur of the year 5408 (September 28, 1647), in the *Beit Midrash* of the holy kabbalist Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli, the congregation finished the *Kol Nidrei* prayer, and the *chazan* approached the *bimah*

to pray Arvit.

**Suddenly**, the sun shone as if in the middle of the day. A radiant smile was seen on the faces of the congregation, "This is a sign that *Mashiach* will come this year!"

**A** few moments passed, the sunlight disappeared, and thick darkness engulfed the synagogue... A terrible fear penetrated their hearts...

**Just** as Rabbi Shimshon finished praying Arvit, Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to him and said, "This year was worthy of redemption, but the *yetzer hara* shook the upper worlds with claims against Am Israel until it succeeded in turning the *middah* (attribute) of mercy into the *middah* of *din* (judgment) in *shamayim*, resulting in a horrifying decree...





two-hundred thousand Jews are to be killed this year.”

**Rabbi** Shimshon was devastated and tried to annul the decree, but when he realized that he wasn't going to succeed, he forced the *yetzer hara* to come to him. The Ramchal testifies<sup>7</sup> that in the year 5408, when the kabbalist Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli saw that there was a decree, he ordered the *yetzer hara* to tell him why it was testifying against Am Israel more than any other nation.

**The** *yetzer hara* then answered, “If these three things are negated by Am Israel, I'll invalidate my accusations... Shabbat, Brit Milah, and Torah.”

**Immediately**, Rabbi Shimshon replied, “We'll die and not erase one letter of our holy Torah!”

**After** realizing that all of his attempts to annul the decree were to no avail, and the decree stood, he called for the angel who taught him Torah and asked it, “Do you know if there is any way to revoke the decree?”

**The** angel answered, “Yes, there is a way. There is a hidden tzaddik who lives in a certain place, and he's highly regarded before Hashem. If he's willing to sacrifice himself for the sanctification of Hashem, Hashem will revoke the decree, and no one will die...”

**Rabbi** Shimshon eagerly awaited the end of the fast. Immediately after praying Arvit, Rabbi Shimshon went to the place of the hidden tzaddik. When Rabbi Shimshon arrived at the home of the tzaddik, the tzaddik gave Rabbi Shimshon a glass of wine, and Rabbi Shimshon said to him, “This glass is in honor of you, for you have merited being an atonement for two-hundred thousand souls of Am Israel.”

**The** tzaddik remained silent and didn't answer him. In the morning, to Rabbi Shimshon's dismay, he discovered that the tzaddik had fled to another country...

**Rabbi** Shimshon returned home in great sorrow. The angel that regularly revealed itself to

Rabbi Shimshon no longer came to him. Rabbi Shimshon became distressed. He fasted until the angel again revealed itself to him and informed him, “If you didn’t go to the tzaddik and tell him, he would have given his soul for the sanctification of Hashem. But, because you went, you caused the deaths of two-hundred thousand Jews!”

**Heartbroken** and full of agony, Rabbi Shimshon began to cry and asked the angel, “Perhaps there’s still hope?”

**The** angel answered, “If you give your life, you’ll save one hundred thousand Jews!”<sup>8</sup>

**In** the year 5408, in the month of Sivan, the Cossack and Tatar battalions led by Khmelnytsky began their campaign of conquest. With unimaginable cruelty, they destroyed hundreds of communities and massacred one hundred thousand Jews.<sup>9</sup>

**On** Friday of parashat Chukat, they wiped out two cities... Tul’chyn and Humia. In the city of Tul’chyn, 3,000 Jews were killed, and in the city of Humia, 1,500 were killed.<sup>10</sup>

**The** *Shach* (*Siftei HaCohen*), describes in a letter<sup>11</sup> the destruction of the two cities of Tul’chyn and Humia... It was on the sixth day, and

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...*~* *Wellspring of Wisdom* *~*...

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**8. And** so it was, Rabbi Shimshon gave his life for the sanctification of Hashem. Tuesday, the first of Av, 1648, the Ukrainian and Tatar soldiers arrived at the city of Polonne and surrounded it.

**On** Thursday, the third of Av, the city was captured, and within only a few moments, thousands of soldiers entered the city and began massacring the citizens. According to the eye-witness of Rabbi Neta Hanover, Rabbi Shimshon was at that time in Polonne. When the enemies besieged the city, he entered the synagogue with three hundred

citizens, everyone clothed in shrouds and prayer shawls on their heads and engaged in prayer until the enemies entered the city and murdered them all in the synagogue.

- Nitzotzei Shimshon (p. 33).

**9. Encyclopedia** L’Beit Israel (Vol. 10, p. 138).

**10. Maasei** Tzaddikim (p. 119).

**11. The** letter is printed in the book “Slichot K’Minhag Kehilot Kedoshot D’Medinot Lita” (p. 127b).

Parashat Chukat - Mercy

the heavens and the earth and all their components were completed perfectly... The fourth of the month of Tammuz in which the tablets were broken and the *urim v'tumim* were hidden. It seems as if an eye for an eye this harsh decree has been brought upon us from on high, for on that sixth day we were sentenced twice...

**The** *Magen Avraham* also wrote<sup>12</sup> that this was the second

tragedy that occurred on the Friday of parashat Chukat. These are his holy words...

**The** Tanya writes that on the Friday of parashat Chukat, there is a custom to fast, for on that day twenty-four carriages full of books were burned in France... Also in the year 5408, two large communities were destroyed on that day, as the *Shach* writes...

### Mercy

**When** Hashem thought of creating the world, he wanted to create it with the attribute of judgment (*Din*), but because he saw that the world couldn't exist in this way, he combined the attribute of mercy (*Rachamim*) and then created the world.

**With** the influence of mercy in the creation, we gained a considerable amount... One of the greatest gains is that permission was given to tzaddikim to reveal Hashem's divine presence in this world.

**At** first, Hashem wanted to create his world with judgment,

and if the world had been created that way, His presence would have stayed hidden.

**Hashem** saw that if the world was created in this way, it would be difficult for the creations to complete their work, for they would have no relation to Him whatsoever due to Him being completely hidden. He, therefore, included in the creation the attribute of mercy.

**Passing** by in this world is like someone walking in complete darkness when a lightning bolt suddenly strikes. For a moment, the world becomes clearer,

## Parashat Chukat - All Mixed Up

and immediately, the darkness returns...

**But**, at that moment, they receive a kind of orientation, a glimpse of where they stand and what direction they need to go. That is what gives the strength to keep going...

**These** revelations, which are a joining of the attribute of mercy to the attribute of judgment, appear by the tzaddikim who by virtue of their souls, can achieve beyond the limits of the natural world...

**The** attribute of mercy is revealed within the bodies of the tzaddikim and expressed in several ways. Three of those ways are...

**1.** By the power of his actions and prayers, he arouses mercy for all those that need.

**2.** By the miracles and wonders that he performs in the world, he reveals Hashem's presence in the world.

**The** third way is what our parasha is about... but before we reveal it, let's take a short tour of this week's parasha...

## All Mixed Up

**On** the fifteenth of Nisan, 2448 years since the creation of the world, thousands of Jews were redeemed from Egypt. Six months later, on the eleventh of Tishrei, they were commanded to build the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).

**Quickly**, they began to collect everything they needed to build the *Mishkan*, and within only two days, they had already collected everything and began to build the *Mishkan*...

**Six** months later, on the 23rd of Adar, the inauguration of the *Mishkan* began. For seven days, Moshe Rabbeinu worked in the *Mishkan* while dressed in white clothes specially made for the *Mishkan*.

**On** the first of Nisan (the beginning of the second year since the exile from Egypt), the *Mishkan* was inaugurated, "In the first month of the second year, on the first of the month, the *Mishkan* was set up" (Shemot 40:17).

Parashat Chukat - In The Merit Of

**On** the next day, the second of Nisan, the first *parah adumah* (red heifer) was burned, and Am Israel was purified. Two days later, on the fourteenth of Nisan, Am Israel offered the first Pesach sacrifice.

**However**, Am Israel was commanded the laws of *parah adumah* thirty-eight years early in *parashat Pekudai*... Why then was the parasha of *parah aduma* brought here in our parasha and not where it was commanded, and then followed by the death of Miriam ?

**In The Merit Of...**

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargelzt<sup>13</sup> said the following...

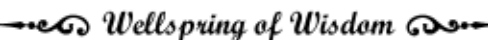
**Am** Israel was enslaved in Egypt... Then, sparks of redemption began to shine, and Hashem sent his messengers to redeem his nation, "I brought you out of the land of Egypt where you were slaves, and redeemed you. I sent before you Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam" (Micha 6:4).

**Onkelos**, on the verse, translates "I sent before you Moshe Aharon and Miriam" as "I sent before you three prophets... Moshe, to teach the nation. Aharon, to atone for the nation. Miriam, to lead the women."

**From** here, we learn that the main task of Moshe Rabbeinu was to teach Torah to Am Israel, the main task of Aharon was to atone for Am Israel, and the main task of Miriam was to instill holiness and purity in the women of Am Israel, and to instruct them in the mitzvot which concern them.

**The** Gemara says<sup>14</sup> that three good leaders stood for Am Israel, Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. Three good gifts were given thanks to them, the well, the clouds of glory, and the *mann*.

**In** the merit of Miriam, all forty years that Am Israel traveled in the desert, a large stone would follow



13. **Imrei** Noam (Parashat Chukat, Maamar 3).

14. Taanit 9a.

**Parashat Chukat - His One Mistake**

them and provide all the water that they needed, and this stone was called the well of Miriam.

**In** the merit of Aharon, clouds would travel in front of Am Israel and instruct them which way they needed to go as well as straighten the way for them.

**In** the merit of Moshe, *mann* would fall from the sky for them to eat.

**For** many years the water continued to flow, the clouds to encircle, and the *mann* to satisfy...

**On** the tenth of Nisan, the

fortieth year of Am Israel in the desert, Miriam the prophetess passes away... The funeral is over, Am Israel went to the sink to wash their hands, and... there's no water ! The well is gone !

**Am** Israel started to panic and began to argue with Moshe...

**Moshe** Rabbeinu saw the immense sorrow of Am Israel and prayed to Hashem, and Hashem answered, saying, "Take the staff and the congregate the nation along with yourself and Aharon your brother and speak to the stone before them" (Bamidbar 20:8)...

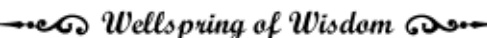
**His One Mistake...**

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l continues and says...

**The** will of Hashem was that Moshe would speak to the stone for it to give water, and then it would give, and thus the name of Hashem would be sanctified, as Rashi explains, "For Am Israel will say... A stone that doesn't speak nor hear and doesn't need

a livelihood upholds the words of Hashem... Even more so, us."<sup>15</sup>

**Also**, what Hashem commanded Moshe to take with him his staff, was because on the staff was engraved the name of Hashem, and by virtue of the sanctity of His name, the spiritual life-force of the stone would awaken, and when Moshe would speak to it, it



**Parashat Chukat - His Final Hour**

would obey his words and give off water.

**However**, in the end, Moshe Rabbeinu didn't speak to the stone but struck it, "Moshe raised his hand and struck the stone twice with his staff and an abundance of water rushed forth, and the people and their livestock drank" (Bamidbar 20:11). As a result of Moshe Rabbeinu hitting the stone and not speaking to it, Hashem said to him, "Since you did not have faith in Me, to sanctify Me in

the eyes of Am Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly to the land which I have given them" (Bamidbar 20:12).

**If** Moshe Rabbeinu had just spoken to the stone, a true belief in Hashem would have been revealed in the hearts of Am Israel... However, after Moshe struck the stone, the revelation of faith in the hearts of Am Israel was prevented, and thus the sanctification of Hashem that was supposed to be caused was also prevented...

**His Final Hour**

**Hashem** came to Moshe and Aharon, saying, "Since you did not have faith in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly to the land which I have given them" (Bamidbar 20:12).

**Following** the sin of which Moshe struck the stone, Moshe and Aharon were sentenced to stay in the desert and not enter Eretz Israel with the rest of the nation.

**One** hundred and ten days passed (approximately) from their decree not to enter the land, and on

the first of Av, Hashem commands Moshe Rabbeinu to accompany Aharon to his final resting place...

**This** is how it's told in our parasha...

**Hashem** revealed Himself to Moshe and commanded him, "Take Aharon, and Elazar his son, and ascend Mount Hor. Take Aharon's garments, and dress Elazar his son with them, and Aharon died there" (Bamidbar 20:25-26).

**Moshe** approached his brother Aharon... "Hashem asked me to

**Parashat Chukat - His Final Hour**

inform you and your son Elazar something. Come with me, and I'll tell you."

**Aharon**, Moshe, and Elazar left the camp, and all of Am Israel accompanied them on their way out. Aharon asked, "Moshe, tell me what Hashem said."

**"Wait** until we reach that mountain," answered Moshe.

**The** entire way, Aharon continued to ask what Hashem wanted to inform him, but Moshe just couldn't find the words...

**Finally**, he gave in and said, "Aharon, my brother, is there anything Hashem deposited in your hands to watch over them for Him?" "Yes," answered Aharon. "And what are they?" "An altar, a table, and the bread upon it," responded Aharon.

**"Aharon..."** said Moshe, "Hashem is asking to take back His deposits..." Aharon didn't understand what Moshe was trying to hint at...

**They** were still talking when suddenly they noticed the entrance to a cave in front of them. Moshe

asked Aharon to enter, and he agreed.

**They** both entered the cave, and Aharon turned to his brother and said, "Moshe, how long will you hide from me what Hashem said to you?" With no more options of avoiding the question, Moshe replied, "Hashem has decided that here will be your final resting place..."

**All** of a sudden, clouds of light enwrapped Aharon and shined like the sun in the firmament of heaven. Moshe said to Aharon, "Aharon, straighten your hands, shut your mouth, and close your eyes." Aharon did as commanded, and Moshe asked him, "How do you feel?" "I feel as if pleasantness and bliss are filling the rooms of my heart..." replied Aharon.

**At** that exact moment, Hashem kissed Aharon, and his soul broke free from his body... When Moshe saw that Aharon had passed away, he left the cave, and it immediately disappeared from his sight as if it was never there, and until today no one knows where Aharon is buried...



## True Self-Sacrifice...

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l once said<sup>16</sup> that the *middah* (attribute) of mercy in which Hashem created the world becomes revealed to all by the tzaddikim. We have already explained above how they reveal this mercy during their lives. However, not only in their lives do they accomplish this...

**Sometimes** the sins of the generation become very numerous (we're not talking about the sins that are done accidentally, but very serious sins

that are done intentionally out of clear knowledge of how serious they are and the punishments for them), and as a result, harsh decrees are decreed on Am Israel.

**During** these times, the only choice left for Am Israel to atone for these sins and to put an end to these harsh decrees is by removing from the world a tzaddik who has the ability to bear on his shoulders the sins of the entire generation.<sup>17</sup>

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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**16. Imrei** Noam (Parashat Chukat, Maamar 2).

**17. In** the year 1848, a severe epidemic broke out in eastern Galicia, which left a Holocaust laden with sickness and death, orphanhood, bereavement, and fear.

**The** confusion among the *Gedolei Hador* and the tzaddikim was great. The gates of heaven seemed locked, as if a curtain of iron was spread between heaven and earth, blocking prayers and supplications from ascending.

**Hearts** were torn with sorrow and pity at the sight of the tears of the oppressed, the sick, and the destitute. Widows and orphans multiplied day by day with no one to save them and no glimmer of hope in sight.

**On** the third of Elul 1848, Rebbe Issachar Ber of Nadvorna, known as Rebbe Bertzi,

ordered to ready his chariot. He took with him a number of his followers and set out through the narrow corridors to the entrance of the city of Nadvorna.

**There,** he ordered the chariot to be placed across the road in a manner that would block the entrance to the city and ordered all his followers to get off the chariot and leave him alone on it.

**“Don’t** be afraid, and don’t fear no man,” commanded Rebbe Bertzi, “and under no circumstances attempt to move my chariot to clear the way!” An hour passed, and a galloping chariot came flying toward the city but was inevitably stopped by the blocked road.

**After** a series of shouts and threats from the passengers of the chariot to clear the

**Parashat Chukat - True Self-Sacrifice...**

**The** Gemara says<sup>18</sup> that calamity doesn't come to the world except while the wicked are in the world, and it doesn't start other than with the tzaddikim...

**Whenever** a harsh decree hovers over the generation, Hashem chooses one tzaddik who has the strength to take upon himself the entire decree and brings him up to heaven.

**Of** course, everything is done with the full consent of the tzaddik. Thirty days before he is supposed to

pass away, he is asked from heaven if he agrees to take on himself the decree in order to abolish the decree from Am Israel, and only if he agrees wholeheartedly is the plan enforced. He is then prepared and helped, with the strength to stand by his decision, and when the time comes for him to pass away from this world, with the intent to be a sacrifice for the entire nation, he does so with immense joy.<sup>19</sup>

**This** is the true revelation of mercy !

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

way for them, they realized that no one was going to do so. Suddenly the chariot's doors opened, and out came an old man who turned his face towards the chariot of the tzaddik of Nadvorna. At the invitation of Rebbe Bertzi, the old man climbed up into his chariot, where they both sat and talked for what seemed like hours on end.

**In** the middle of the conversation, the old man got out of the chariot, approached his own chariot, pulled out several thick books, returned to Rebbe Bertzi's chariot, and handed over the books. From a distance, Rebbe Bertzi's followers noticed how he flipped through the books and then returned them to their owner.

**Then**, the old man got back on his chariot, ordered his men to return to where they came from, and in the blink

of an eye, the chariot disappeared just as fast as it had come.

**On** his way back to the city, Rebbe Bertzi looked at those that accompanied him and said, "I had no choice... The Books of Life and Death were open before me, and I saw that another twenty-four thousand Jews were written in the Book of Death... I couldn't endure it, so I gave myself in exchange for them..."

**As** soon as he returned to his home, Rebbe Bertzi got into his bed, and on that same day, he took his last breath... and the plague was stopped...

**18. Baba** Kama 60a.

**19. In** the last year before his passing, HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l talked a lot about grave events that are

Parashat Chukat - Atonement and Purity

We can now explain why the commandments of *parah adumah* were put in our parasha...

### Atonement and Purity

**The** Gemara says as follows...<sup>20</sup>

**Rabbi** Ami said, “Why was the parasha of Miriam’s death and the parasha of the *parah adumah* put one after the other? To tell you, that just like the *parah adumah* atones, so too, the passing away of tzaddikim atones.”

**Rabbi** Elazar said, “Why was the parasha of Aaron’s death and the parasha of the priestly

garments put one after the other? Just like the priestly garments atone, so too, the passing away of tzaddikim atones.”

**With** these words, the Gemara reveals to us the source of the third way in which the revelation of mercy is brought about by the tzaddikim.

**This** is how HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt”l put it...

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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supposed to occur. In the end, he decided to give his life in exchange for those of Am Israel.

**From** heaven, they agreed but also demanded some suffering...

**HaRav** Yoram was diagnosed with cancer in his liver, and from the third of Elul to the twenty-seventh of Tishrei, he suffered torment from the disease, and with his death (at the age of fifty-eight), he annulled the decree !

**And** so, he said, “I know you all need protection, and the protection I have taken upon myself.” After his death, Rabbi Shalom Arush shlita stood up in his *Beit Midrash* and said, “I received from the

hidden tzaddikim of the generation that on the 10th of Tevet, of the year 5776, there should have been a severe plague and HaRav Yoram Abargel sacrificed his life in order to save tens of thousands of Jews.”

**Hashem** didn’t remain indebted to him...

**HaRav** Yoram’s impression and teachings have spread throughout the world. Every day thousands of Jews are inspired by them, and his grave has become a center for countless Jews who have told stories after stories of salvations and wonders they received after praying there...

**20. Moed** Katan 28a.

**Parashat Chukat - Atonement and Purity**

**The** beginning of parashat Chukat teaches us that in order to purify someone who has become impure due to contact with a dead person, we must take a red heifer, burn it, mix the heifer's ashes with spring water, and sprinkle them seven times on the impure person on the third and seventh days since their becoming impure.

**Immediately** afterward, the Torah moves on to tell us about the death of Miriam<sup>21</sup> the prophetess in *Kadesh*,<sup>22</sup> "The entire congregation of Am Israel arrived at the Tzin desert in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh, and Miriam died there and was buried there" (Bamidbar 20:1).

**We** find many places in the words of *chazal* that our rabbis demand the reason why the Torah arranged different parashot one next to another. The reason for this is because every detail in the Torah is very accurate, and therefore

even the proximity of the parashot in the Torah have deep meaning, and we must then attempt to understand what they are.

**Hence**, *chazal* asked, "Why was the parasha of Miriam's death and the parasha of the *parah adumah* put one after the other," and answered that the reason is to tell you that just like the *parah adumah* atones, so too, the passing away of the tzaddikim atones.

**According** to the literal meaning of what's written in the Torah, the main purpose of the *parah adumah* was to purify the impure and not to atone for sins. However, *chazal* came and said, "Just like the *parah adumah* atones..." implying that the mitzvah of the *parah adumah* does indeed come to atone. And what does the *parah adumah* come to atone for?

For the sin of the golden calf.<sup>23</sup>

**Rashi** writes at the beginning of our parasha<sup>24</sup> the words of

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

**21. Which** occurred on the 10th of Nisan.

**22. One** of the places where Am Israel encamped in the desert.

**23. See** Tosafot on Moed Katan 28a.

**24. Bamidbar** 19:22.

**Parashat Chukat - The Song Of The Well**

Rabbi Moshe, who likens this to a young slave who dirtied the king's palace, and the king's servants ordered his mother to come and clean the palace. So too, Am Israel, since they sinned with the golden calf, their atonement is specifically by a cow, who is the mother of the calf.

**According** to this, the red heifer atones for the gravest sin

of *avodah zara*, for the sin of the golden calf was a sin of *avodah zara*. Thus, *chazal* inform us that Miriam's death and the laws of the *parah adumah* are put one after the other in order to teach us that the death of a tzaddik also has the power to atone for even the most serious sins of Am Israel.

**The Song Of The Well**

**Am** Israel continued on their way to Eretz Israel without Miriam and without Aharon. Nonetheless, thanks to Moshe Rabbeinu, the well<sup>25</sup> and the clouds of glory returned, and Am Israel lacked nothing.

**The** inhabitants of the land of Israel, the Emorites, sent spies to follow Am Israel and see where they would go. The spies reported back to their nation that according to what they observed, Am Israel would have to cross a stream flowing between two high mountains in only a couple of days.

**They** quickly readied themselves for action. They formed an elite unit of commandos and sent them to the area to wait for Am Israel. When they got there, they positioned themselves between the mountains, armed themselves with arrows, and waited for Am Israel to pass...

**There** was one thing the Emorites didn't know... They didn't know that Am Israel traveled with the *Aron Habrit* leading them, straightening the way, lowering mountains, and raising valleys...

*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

**25. The** Well of Miriam that miraculously traveled with Am Israel in the desert and provided them with water.

**Parashat Chukat - If My Friend Is There, I'm There**

**And** so, right before Am Israel crossed the two mountains, the mountains squished together and crushed to death all the Emorites who hid between them, and the stream washed away all their blood and crushed limbs.

**After** the mountains returned to their place and Am Israel passed, the well descended into the stream, raised their blood and limbs, and

**If My Friend Is There, I'm There...**

**It's** worth noting that every song in the *Tanach* (such as *Shir HaShirim*, *Shirat HaYam*, etc.), the name of Hashem is mentioned several times. Why, then, in the song of the well is Hashem's name not mentioned even once?

**In** his commentary on the song of the well, Rashi raises this question and answers with a parable of a king who had an important minister who was very dear to him. Once, all of the king's other ministers decided to hold a feast in honor of the king. Before the king agreed to their invitation, he asked them if they had also invited the aforementioned minister, who was very dear to him. When they

passed them around the camp. When Am Israel saw this, they retroactively realized the great miracle that Hashem had done for them, and they began to sing. And since the miracle became known to them through the well, they sang in thanks to the well.

**Most** interestingly though, Hashem's name wasn't mentioned even once in their song...

replied that they hadn't invited him, the king immediately informed them that he wouldn't come to the feast, saying, "If my dear friend is there, so am I. If not, neither am I."

**The** moral... The king is Hashem, the important minister is Moshe Rabbeinu, and the feast that the ministers held is the song of the well. Since Am Israel didn't mention Moshe Rabbeinu, the king's dear friend, in the song, Hashem didn't agree that his name would be mentioned either.

**We** need then to understand why Moshe's name wasn't mentioned... But before that...

## Death - Not Always Literal

**Rebbe** Nachman wrote<sup>26</sup> that a person's name is their soul.<sup>27</sup> Like what's written, "The soul of a creature is its name" (Bamidbar 2:19). Rabbi Nachman continues and reveals to us that just as there is actual sacrifice of the body, so is there sacrifice of one's name.

**When** a tzaddik undertakes to have his name defamed, this is considered a real sacrifice, and he's able to eliminate all decrees from Am Israel.

**In** some respect, sacrificing one's name is even more difficult than sacrificing one's body... The body can only be killed once, but one's name, a person can endure days and years of

shame and humiliation, and each time the anguish is felt again.

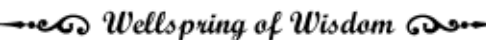
**Likewise**, when someone becomes injured, everyone runs over to help and take pity on them, but when someone becomes humiliated, no one in the world can help, and no one can even know other than Hashem.

**Therefore**, when a tzaddik agrees to be humiliated and degraded in front of everyone, have his name defamed and talked about by everyone, and he becomes shamed and disgraced, it's considered as if he had sacrificed himself, and he's able to save Am Israel from the decrees that were supposed to come upon them!

## Watch What You Say

**We've** already learned that by burning the *parah adumah*

and sprinkling it on Am Israel, they are able to be raised from



26. **Likutei** Moharan I (Torah 260).

27. **Rebbe** Eliezer Shlomo Shik zt"l added that within a person's name are all his spiritual abilities. For that reason, we must be very careful when naming our

children and remember to give them the names of tzaddikim so that they'll also be able to receive spiritual abilities from the tzaddikim that will help them in their lives.

- Toch HaNachal (Shemot, p. 102).

impurity to purity, and as a result, any harsh decrees are absolved, and mercy is shown to them.

**However**, since during our exile, we don't have a red heifer to burn, Hashem established another way for us to reach the same result, and that is by burning the Torah.

**The** burning of the Torah is possible by one of two ways...

**1.** By the burning of holy books, as we have seen throughout history.

**2.** By the death of tzaddikim.

**So** too, the death of tzaddikim is possible by one of two possibilities...

**1.** By death, literally.

**2.** By the tzaddik accepting to be humiliated and degraded in front of everyone and having the people defame his name.

**Now** it's clear that since our parasha deals with freeing Am Israel from harsh decrees by the

use of the *parah adumah* and by the death of tzaddikim, therefore the parasha speaks about the deaths of Miriam and Aaron as well as the decree on Moshe<sup>28</sup> to die in the desert and not to enter Eretz Israel.

**From** all this, we can also learn about the magnitude of the prohibition against talking about *Talmidei Chachamim* because perhaps this *Talmid Chacham* sacrificed his name in order to absolve a harsh decree from Am Israel.

**Even** more so in our generation, where it's become harder to know who's a real *Talmid Chacham* and tzaddik and who is not, must we guard ourselves against this.

**And** so said Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l...

**Never** speak ill of any Jew, and flee from anywhere that has even the slightest trace of controversy...

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

**28. The** fact that Am Israel forgot to mention Moshe's name (which is a form of

having his name defamed) it's also considered as if he had died in our parasha.



Parashat Chukat - Watch What You Say

**May** Hashem protect us hearts with true love for every  
from all danger and fill our Jew!

**Shabbat Shalom !**



## *The Pathway...*

1. Tzaddikim always try to find the right way to give complete help to the Jew standing in front of them, no matter what is needed to do. When Hashem thought of creating the world, he wanted to create it with the attribute of judgment (*Din*), but because he saw that the world couldn't exist in this way, he combined the attribute of mercy (*Rachamim*) and then created the world. At first, Hashem wanted to create his world with judgment, and if the world had been created that way, His presence would have stayed hidden. With the influence of mercy in the creation, we gained a considerable amount. One of the greatest gains is that permission was given to tzaddikim to reveal Hashem's divine presence in this world.

2. Passing by in this world is like someone walking in complete darkness when a lightning bolt suddenly strikes. For a moment, the world becomes clearer, and immediately, the darkness returns. Yet, at that moment, they receive a glimpse of where they stand and what direction they need to go. That is what gives the strength to keep going. These revelations, which are a joining of the attribute of mercy to the attribute of judgment, appear by the tzaddikim who by virtue of their souls, can achieve beyond the limits of the natural world.

3. The attribute of mercy is revealed within the bodies of the tzaddikim and expressed in several ways. Three of those ways are, 1. By the power of his actions and prayers, he arouses mercy for all those that need. 2. By the miracles and wonders that he performs in the world, he reveals Hashem's presence in the world. 3. By their death...

4. Sometimes the sins of the generation become very numerous (we're not talking about the sins that are done accidentally, but very serious sins that are done intentionally out of clear knowledge of how serious they are and the punishments for them), and as a result, harsh decrees are decreed on Am Israel. During these times, the only choice left for Am Israel to atone for these sins and to put an end to these harsh decrees is by removing from the world a tzaddik who has the ability to bear on his shoulders the sins of the entire generation.

5. By burning the *parah adumah* and sprinkling it on Am Israel, they are able to be raised from impurity to purity, and as a result, any harsh decrees are absolved, and mercy is shown to them.

6. However, since during our exile, we don't have a red heifer to burn, Hashem established another way for us to reach the same result, and that is by burning the Torah.

*The Pathway...*

7. The burning of the Torah is possible by one of two ways... 1. By the burning of holy books, as we have seen throughout history. 2. By the death of tzaddikim. So too, the death of tzaddikim is possible by one of two possibilities...

1. By death, literally. 2. By the tzaddik accepting to be humiliated and degraded in front of everyone and having the people defame his name.

8. When a tzaddik undertakes to have his name defamed, this is considered a real sacrifice, and he's able to eliminate all decrees from Am Israel. In some respect, sacrificing one's name is even more difficult than sacrificing one's body. The body can only be killed once, but one's name, a person can endure days and years of shame and humiliation, and each time the anguish is felt again. When a tzaddik agrees to be humiliated and degraded in front of everyone, have his

name defamed and talked about by everyone, and he becomes shamed and disgraced, it's considered as if he had sacrificed himself, and he's able to save Am Israel from the decrees that were supposed to come upon them!

9. From all this, we can also learn about the magnitude of the prohibition against talking about *Talmidei Chachamim* because perhaps this *Talmid Chacham* sacrificed his name in order to absolve a harsh decree from Am Israel. Even more so in our generation, where it's become harder to know who's a real *Talmid Chacham* and tzaddik and who is not, must we guard ourselves against this. And so said Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l, "Never speak ill of any Jew, and flee from anywhere that has even the slightest trace of controversy." May Hashem protect us from all danger and fill our hearts with true love for every Jew!



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9<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, 5782



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	8:11 pm	9:19 pm	9:41 pm
Miami	7:57 pm	8:55 pm	9:28 pm
Los Angeles	7:49 pm	8:51 pm	9:19 pm
Montreal	8:26 pm	9:41 pm	9:56 pm
Toronto	8:42 pm	9:54 pm	10:13 pm
Jerusalem	7:34 pm	8:24 pm	9:20 pm

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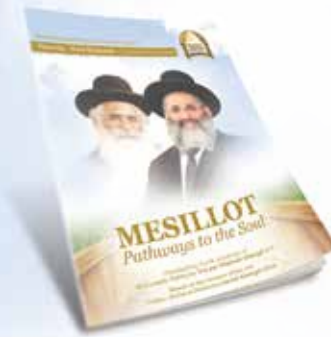
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