

## Chukat Roundup

The Torah is not written in the order in which events happened, and this week's *parshah* jumps to the end of the Jews' forty years in the desert, the 38th year, to be exact. We begin by learning about a special mitzvah that enables a Jew who is *tameh*--impure—to become pure again and thus be allowed in the *Mishkan*. This is the commandment of the *parah adumah*, the red cow. If someone becomes impure because of contact with a dead body, the ashes of the *parah adumah*, together with cedar wood, a branch of hyssop, and wool, can purify him.

When the People of Israel arrived in the desert of Zin, Miriam passed away, and the well of water that they had always had in her merit dried up. So the people had no water and complained to Moses. G-d told Moses to talk to the rock and tell it to bring forth water. But Moses instead hit the rock with his stick, and water gushed out. G-d then told Moses that because he did not follow his instructions exactly, he would not be able to go into the Land of Israel.

The Jews wanted to continue traveling towards Israel, so they sent messengers to the king of Edom asking him permission to pass through Edom's land, which was next in their route. The king responded that they may **not** travel through his land, and if they try to, he will come and kill everybody. The Jews said that they would not take any food or drink any water, they would just walk on the road so they could get to the other side, but the king still said absolutely not. So the Jews had to take a longer route to get around the land of Edom.

G-d told Moses to take Aaron and his son Elazar up a mountain called Mount Hor. There, Moses took Aaron's clothing and put it on Elazar, and Aaron lay down and passed away. When the Jews saw Moses and Elazar come down alone, they realized that Aaron had passed away, and everyone began to weep. They mourned for 30 days.

The extra long journey around the land of Edom discouraged the Jews, and they complained again to Moses. Poisonous snakes then attacked the camp, and G-d told Moses to put up a brass serpent high on a pole. Everyone who had been bitten and then saw Moses' brass serpent was then healed.

The Jews sing a song of thanks to G-d for the well that provided them with water in the desert.

Now the Jews reach another land that they have to pass through. So they send a message to Sihon, King of the Amorites, asking for permission to pass through his land. This time, Sihon did not just say no, he actually went out to war against the Jews. They fought back and won, gaining all of his three lands. Then Og, King of Bashan, came out to fight and the Jews won him too and conquered his land

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