

INCOMPREHENSIBLE BUT DEFENSIBLE

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Chukas-Balak

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Identically In Its Infinity It Is Unfathomable

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The Same Alacrity Incumbent For Reinstatement

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The Anomalous Interchange of the Protagonist & Antagonist

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Unappreciative of Her Exceptionalism So Repercussions Emerge

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A Sefer by
The Chafetz Chaim

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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.

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.

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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. 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-Balak



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Spiritual Contamination, Rooted in Evil

Torah: If one comes in contact with the remains of a human being, he becomes contaminated with a level of spiritual impurity that can only be removed through the process of the red heifer. This contamination is unlike other instances of spiritual contamination (such as coming in contact with the carcass of an animal or certain species of rodents or a menstruant), which can be removed through one's immersion in a *mikvah*. Because we do not have the red heifer, we remain contaminated with the impurity of the dead. We will not be relieved of this contamination until the coming of *Moshiach* when this process will be reinstated. Why is the contamination of the dead different from all other forms of spiritual contamination?

Prior to the sin of *Adam* (eating from the Tree of Knowledge), man was immortal. It was only after he ate of its fruit that he became subject to death. He introduced death into himself and all existence. The sin

of the Tree of Knowledge originated as a result of the *lashon hara* (evil speech) of the ancient serpent of the Garden of Eden that had seduced Eve.

Torah: The snake enticed Eve to eat from the Tree saying, "You will not surely die; for G-d knows that on the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d..."

Midrash: The snake had said to Eve that G-d became the Creator only because He had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. He does not want man to eat from the Tree so that he too should become a creator. Thus, *lashon hara* was the direct cause of introducing death into existence.

Torah: If one speaks *lashon hara* excessively he will ultimately develop a leprous lesion. The individual is not considered to be contaminated until the *Kohen* pronounces the lesion to be leprous. When he assumes the state of a leper, he must be sent out of all the camps of Israel and remain alone and separate from the Jewish

people. The only way the leper will be healed from his leprosy is if G-d allows him to be rehabilitated. He must introspect and repent sufficiently for the negative speech that he had spoken. The spiritual contamination of the leper has many of the characteristics of the contamination of the dead.

Chazal: A leper is the equivalent of a dead person (because he is detached from the Jewish people). If one enters into a room with a leper he becomes contaminated as if he had entered into a room that contains the remains of a human being. Since *lashon hara* was the element that introduced death into existence, it brings about an intensity of impurity that is the equivalent of contamination of the dead.

In both the case of the leper and the contamination of the dead one cannot become purified unless G-d causes a change that will relieve the person from the source of contamination. Just as the dead can only be resurrected by the Will of G-d so too the impurity of the dead can only be removed when G-d deems it so. The dynamic of the red heifer, regarding its purifying and contaminating ability, is beyond the grasp of the human mind. King Solomon, who was the wisest man who ever lived, had said regarding the understanding of the red heifer, "It is distant from me." Although he had understood the reason for every statute in the *Torah*, the understanding of the red heifer was beyond his grasp.

Prior to accepting the *Torah* at Sinai, the Jewish people were considered Noahides. However, after receiving the *Torah*, they ascended to a level of *Adam* before the sin. At that moment, they became immortal and death no longer had relevance to them. However, after the sin of the golden calf, they once again returned to the level of *Adam* after the sin and once again were subject to death. Thus, the sin of the golden calf, which was idolatry, brought death back upon the Jewish people.

Gemara in Tractate *Avodah Zorah*: An idolatrous object brings about a level of contamination that is similar to the contamination from the dead (contamination occurs if one is under the same roof of the remains/idolatrous object). Thus, the calf symbolizes death because it was the cause of death. Just as *Adam* detached himself from the source of life by not heeding the Word of G-d and partaking of the Tree, so too did the Jewish people detach themselves from the source of life with the sin of the golden calf. The only way one can return from death is through resurrection. The only way one can be

relieved from the contamination of the dead is through the red heifer which is a gift from G-d and not something which is the conventional means of purification, such as immersion in a *mikvah*.

Seemingly, the contamination of the dead is a detachment from holiness. A *Kohen* is not permitted to contaminate himself to the dead; however, an ordinary Jew is permitted to do so. Since the tribe of *Levy* did not participate in the sin of the golden calf, they in truth should not have relevance to death because they never detached themselves from G-d. However, because they are part of the Jewish people, who were no longer worthy of an intimate relationship with G-d as before the golden calf, they were affected by the detachment. Thus, they are subject to death as every other Jew. However, G-d wanted the *Kohanim* because they are the special representatives of the Tribe of *Levy* to remove themselves from the contamination of the dead because it is contrary to cleaving to G-d himself. Thus, the *Kohen* is not permitted to come in contact with the remains of a human being.

Perceiving a Tzaddik in His True Light

Torah: After they had arrived in the *Tzin* Desert, *Miriam* passed away and there was no water for the Jewish people. The people began to quarrel with *Moshe* in a disrespectful manner, saying, "If only we had perished as our brethren perished before *Hashem*! Why have you brought the congregation of *Hashem* to this wilderness to die there, we and our animals..." *Moshe* was told by G-d to take his staff together with *Aaron* and speak to the rock to bring forth water. *Moshe* became incensed by the behavior of the Jewish people which stemmed from their lack of faith.

Torah: "*Moshe* raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice; abundant water came forth..." Because *Moshe* chose to strike the rock rather than speaking to it as G-d had commanded him, G-d decreed that *Moshe* would not enter into the Land of Israel. As a result of what had transpired, it was also decreed that *Aaron* would pass away and not enter into the Land. If all of these negative consequences came about as a result of the water ceasing to flow after *Miriam* passed away, why did G-d not deem that the water should flow uninterrupted? We see that *Moshe* immediately reinstated the wellspring in his merit.

Rashi citing *Gemara* in Tractate *Taanis*: “From here we learn that the wellspring that provided water for the Jewish people in the desert for forty years was in the merit of *Miriam*.” It is evident from the *Gemara* that until this moment the Jewish people were unaware that the wellspring that had provided water for them was in the merit of *Miriam*. G-d thus caused the water to cease when *Miriam* passed away to reveal to them that the source of the blessing of the water which provided unlimited benefit to them was in the merit of *Miriam*.

Despite the tragic consequences of the water ceasing, G-d wanted the Jewish people to appreciate and esteem *Miriam* for her dimension of devoutness – that her merit was sufficient to provide the water for the entire Jewish people in the desert. Until that moment, the Jewish people regarded *Miriam* as the one who had taken *Moshe* out of the Nile and saved his life. She was the one who led the women in song after the Sea closed upon the Egyptian armies. She was also the one who became a leper after speaking negatively about *Moshe* her brother. The entire Jewish people and the Divine Presence needed to wait seven days for *Miriam* to recover. Other than these instances, the Jewish people had not inkling of *Miriam*’s value as a devoutly righteous woman.

Gemara in Tractate *Taanis* citing a verse in *Zacharia*: “I removed the three shepherds in one month.” This verse seemingly indicates that *Moshe*, *Aaron*, and *Miriam* all passed away in the same month. However, the *Gemara* tells us that this was not so. *Miriam* passed away in the month of *Nissan*, *Aaron* in the month of *Av*, and *Moshe* in the month of *Adar*.

Gemara: Since the wellspring and Clouds of Glory that were initially in the merit of *Miriam* and *Aaron* had ceased upon their passing and were reinstated in the merit of *Moshe*, the Jewish people did not fully appreciate the value of *Miriam* and *Aaron*. It was not until *Moshe* passed away, when all of these gifts ceased, that the Jewish people were able to internalize and appreciate the loss of the “three shepherds of Israel.” It was the equivalent of losing all of them in one month.

Although the cessation of the water after the passing of *Miriam* revealed that it was only in her merit that the Jewish people were provide with water; however, since it was immediately reinstated in *Moshe*’s merit, they were not able to sufficiently internalize the value of her loss. After *Aaron* passed away, the Jewish

people (men and women) did internalize it because he was essential to bringing peace and harmony between husband and wife. His loss was thus felt deeply by the entire Jewish people.

Nevertheless, regarding the cessation of the Clouds of Glory, they did not sufficiently associate it with the merit of *Aaron* because again it was reinstated immediately in the merit of *Moshe*. It was not until the passing of *Moshe*, when all three gifts ceased to be (the manna, wellspring, and clouds of glory) did the Jewish people fully internalize and understand the loss of the three the providers (*Moshe*, *Aaron* and *Miriam*) that G-d had given them. G-d wanted the Jewish people to appreciate and understand the value of *Miriam* regardless of the cost and consequence. Even it meant that *Moshe* would not enter into the Land of Israel and bring about the ultimate redemption, it was essential that the Jewish people appreciate and esteem *Miriam* properly for the person that she was.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If a *tzaddik* passes away and the Jewish people do not appreciate his loss and thus do not mourn sufficiently for him or introspect and repent, it brings about an intense level of prosecution upon them. It was therefore critical for the survival of the Jewish people that they understand the dimension of *Miriam*’s devoutness and spirituality.

Spiritual Impurity, A Consequence of G-d’s Absence

Torah: “This is the statute of the *Torah*, which Hashem has commanded....”

Midrash citing a verse from Psalms: “‘The statements of G-d are statements of purity.’ *Reb Yehoshua ben Levy* says, ‘We find that the *Torah* adds two or three words so that something of impurity does not emanate from His mouth. (This is considered unusual because the *Torah* always expresses itself in the most concise manner). As it states (regarding the Kosher and non-Kosher species that entered into the ark of *Noach*), ‘...from the animals that are pure and from the animals that are not pure..’ Regarding the animals that are not pure, the *Torah* does not state ‘from the animals that are contaminated (which is a less refined manner of speech)...’ When G-d expresses Himself, it is in the most refined and pure manner, although it requires is a more lengthy manner of expression.

Midrash: "Reb Yudon says, 'When the *Torah* presents sign of a non-Kosher animals it begins by identifying it with the Kosher sign rather than the lack of the sign. In order for an animal to qualify to be a Kosher species it must have split hooves and chew its cud. For example, the camel is not a Kosher species because "it only chews its cud..." The *Torah* chose not to begin by mentioning that the camel is not Kosher because it does not have split hooves, which would be highlighting its non-Kosher characteristic. Instead, the *Torah* refers to the positive quality of the camel that it "only chews its cud" and later mentions that it does not have slit hooves.

Torah: Regarding the pig, it is not a Kosher species because it "only has split hooves." The *Torah* does not begin by mentioning that "it does not chew its cud" in order to express itself in the most refined and pure manner. This is the meaning of the verse in Psalms, "The statements of G-d are statements of purity."

Torah: One is not permitted to enter into the Temple in a contaminated state because it is the location of the Divine Presence. Spiritual contamination is a consequence of a spiritual void, an absence of holiness. When one enters into a location of G-d's Presence, there is no void. It is thus forbidden to enter in a contaminated state. When one becomes spiritually contaminated, it is because he was exposed to a context of spiritual void because it was devoid of holiness.

Similarly, one is not permitted to eat sacrificial meat if one is in a spiritually contaminated state or if the meat itself became contaminated. This is because sacrifices are a means of drawing the individual close to G-d, which is the antithesis of spiritual contamination, which being devoid of G-d. Although the sacrificial meat may have been initially consecrated for G-d, since it became contaminated, it becomes disassociated with its holy designation. The object that is contaminated cannot be the means to draw close to G-d.

In order for one to be close to G-d and cleave to Him there can be no barriers that interfere with that closeness. The more one reflects G-d's characteristics and emulates His Ways, the more he will be able to cleave to Him. If one chooses not to emulate G-d, he will not qualified to cleave to Him because there is a lack of compatibility. Since G-d chooses to express Himself in the most pure and refined manner (despite the length of that expression), one must also do so.

Gemara in Tractate *Pesachim*: "One should not utter from his mouth something that is inappropriate. One should always speak in a refined (pure) manner." Seemingly, this would be included in the positive commandment, "You shall walk in His (G-d) ways." A Jew must speak in a pure manner not so that he should be more refined, but rather so that he should establish a greater commonality with G-d. As the *Gemara* explains, "Just as He is Merciful, you should be merciful. Just as He is Gracious, you should be gracious, etc."

Midrash: "There were children in the time of (King) David, who could interpret all of the laws of spiritual purity with exceptional proficiency.... King David prayed on their behalf, 'G-d, You should watch over them. You should protect them from this generation.'" What is the meaning of 'watch over them'? It is that the *Torah* that they had learned should remain intact in their hearts. They should be protected from a generation that deserves to be destroyed. Despite the uniqueness of *Torah* in this generation, when they would go into battle, they would have many causalities. Why was this so? It is because they spoke *lashon hara* (negative speech)... There were many antagonists who had spoken *lashon hara* against King David and wanted to destroy him. King David prayed that the Divine Presence should ascend to heaven in order to remove itself from their midst."

When one speaks negatively about his fellow it is an expression of the individual's arrogance. The only reason one sees his fellow in a negative light and deprecates him, is only because he does not recognize and appreciate his own shortcomings. If one would truly see what he needs to correct in his own life, he would not see another in a negative context. Thus, speaking negatively about another emanates from one's self-centeredness.

Gemara in Tractate *Sotah*: Regarding an arrogant person, G-d says, "There is not enough room in the world for the both of us." G-d thus removes Himself from existence so as not to be associated with this type of person. *Lashon hara* creates the void and vacuum and lack of holiness because of G-d's disassociation from this setting.

Chazal: If one is identified as being part of a group that speaks *lashon hara*, he will not be qualified and deserving to receive the Divine Presence after he passes away. In order to establish an intimacy and attachment to G-d, one must remove all barriers and establish a commonality with Him.

Moshe's Unforgivable Sin

Torah: After *Miriam* had passed away, the wellspring that had provided water for the Jewish people in the desert ceased to flow. The Jewish people, seeing that they were without water complained to *Moshe*. The *Torah* states, "The glory of *Hashem* appeared to them. *Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Take your staff and gather the assembly...and speak to the rock before their eyes and it shall give its water.'"

Torah: "Moshe said to the Jewish people, 'Listen now, O rebels, shall we bring forth water from this rock?' Then *Moshe* raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff..." Because *Moshe* had struck the rock rather than speaking to it as G-d had commanded him, G-d said to *Moshe* and *Aaron*, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, you will not bring this congregation into the Land that I have given them." G-d, thus decreed that *Moshe* will pass away before the Jewish people enter into the Promised Land because he did not follow His Word. What was the sin of *Moshe* for which he was so severely punished?

Rashi: *Moshe* sinned by striking the rock rather than speaking to it. If *Moshe* would have spoken to the rock, he would have sanctified G-d's Name before the Jewish people but he chose not to do so.

Sforno: The ultimate level of miracle is one that comes about without any human intervention. When a miracle comes about solely due to G-d's intervention it is a manifestation and the highest level of His Providence. With this level of miracle, there is no doubt that G-d Himself brought about the miracle. However, if there is human participation in bringing about a miracle it minimizes it.

Despite all of the revealed miracles from the time of the exodus and throughout their journey in the desert, the Jewish people continuously complained to *Moshe* regarding various setbacks. They did so because they did not fully trust G-d. They did not believe that He was going to redeem them and bring them safely to a land flowing with milk and honey. They had a concern that G-d was actually waiting for the moment to destroy them for their idolatrous was of the past. After the sin of the golden calf, the Jewish people's concern over G-d's intent became greater because they felt even more culpable.

G-d wanted to establish a level of trust with the Jewish people. He wanted to openly demonstrate His love for

them and His intentions to bring them to the Promised Land where He would bestow upon them unlimited blessing. In order to convince them of His love, G-d wanted *Moshe* to only speak to the rock so that it should bring forth water without human intervention, thus bringing about them most advanced level of miracle.

However, rather than speaking to the rock, *Moshe* became incensed and referred to the Jewish people as "rebels" and chose to strike the rock. G-d told *Moshe* that he had the opportunity to communicate to the Jewish people His love for them through the revealed miracle of the rock, but rather he chose not to bring about the miracle in this manner. Thus, *Moshe* did not allow the sanctification of G-d's Name to come about.

Rambam in the Laws of the Fundamentals of *Torah:* Anyone whose belief is based upon miracles, regardless of how awesome the miracles may be, his belief is considered to be weak. This is because one could say that *Moshe* was a greater sorcerer than the Egyptians and thus the miracles of Egypt were not due to Divine Intervention but rather sorcery. However, at Sinai when G-d revealed Himself to the entire Jewish people and said to *Moshe* "tell the them this and this" there would no longer be a question that *Moshe* was truly G-d's spokesman.

G-d said to *Moshe*, "They will believe in you forever." If this is so, how could *Korach* have had a claim that *Moshe* was not truly the G-d's spokesman? *Korach* claimed that the *Torah* was actually the word of *Moshe*, however it was endorsed by G-d. Whatever *Moshe* thought to be necessary, G-d agreed with him that it should be so. Although ultimately it is the Word of G-d, *Moshe* is the originator.

When *Moshe* chose to strike the rock and not speak to it as G-d had commanded him, he was in essence behaving in a manner that was reminiscent of *Korach's* claim. G-d wanted His Name to be sanctified by communicating His love for the Jewish people through *Moshe's* speaking to the rock. However, *Moshe* believed otherwise because he felt that they were not worthy of this level of miracle. He referred to them as "rebels."

If G-d did not severely punish *Moshe* at this moment for his decision to strike the rock, the people could say that *Korach* was correct in his assessment that *Moshe* had the right to do as he wished. *Moshe* chose to strike the rock rather than speak to it as G-d had commanded,

and G-d was in agreement with *Moshe's* decision. Therefore, regardless of *Moshe's* advanced spiritual level and achievement, it was decreed that he not enter into the Land of Israel for striking the rock.

5. Irrefutable Truth (from Korach)

Torah: After *Korach* and his assembly brought their fire pans and burned the incense, they were killed immediately. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them in the presence of the entire Jewish people. After witnessing the open Divine Retribution of G-d against those who mutinied against *Moshe*, all the Jewish people came before *Moshe* and *Aaron* to complain saying, "You have killed the people of *Hashem*!"

Ramban: The basis for their claim against *Moshe* and *Aaron* was, that the test of the incense to determine who was qualified to be the High Priest was chosen by *Moshe*, although he knew that it would kill all those who were not qualified. All of the Jewish people were aware of the death of *Aaron's* children *Nadav* and *Avihu*. They were stuck down by G-d for bringing the incense offering. The Jewish people believed that *Moshe* should have chosen some other manner of test to determine the qualifications of *Korach* and his community and not something that was considered to be lethal.

Torah: "*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Remove yourselves from among this assembly and I shall destroy them in an instant!' They fell on their faces." G-d informed *Moshe* that the Attribute of Justice had been evoked and was prepared to destroy the entire Jewish people.

Torah: "*Moshe* said to *Aaron*, 'Take the fire-pan and put on it fire from upon the Altar and place incense— and go quickly to midst of the assembly and provide atonement for them, for the fury has gone out from the presence of *Hashem*; the plague has begun!'"

Rashi citing the *Gemara* in Tractate *Shabbos*: "When *Moshe* had ascended to heaven (to receive the *Torah*), the angel of death revealed to him a secret. When one burns (in its proper context) the incense it will cause plague to cease." Why did the angel of death reveal this particular secret to *Moshe*? One could say that since plague causes death and the angel of death is responsible for death, he revealed to *Moshe* the secret of how to incapacitate him. The *Torah* tells us that after *Aaron* had burned the incense, the plague ceased immediately.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: "*Reb Ami* said, 'There is no death without sin and there is no suffering without iniquity.'"

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: "*Reb Chanina Ben Dosa* said, 'It is not the (poisonous) lizard that kills, it is sin that kills.'" It is clear that death is a consequence of sin.

King Solomon in Ecclesiastes: "There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." Meaning, regardless of how devoutly righteous one may be, man can never be perfect enough to withstand the prosecution of the Attribute of Justice, which is exacting. Thus, all mankind, regardless of one's degree of righteousness is subject to death. The only reason one does not die immediately upon sinning is because the Attribute of Mercy is in effect to give one the opportunity to repent and atone for his sin. If however, the Attribute of Mercy would be suspended even for a moment, it would bring about immediate suffering and death.

Chazal: The incense offering has the ability to silence prosecution, which is introduced by the angel of death.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: "I (G-d) have created the evil inclination and the *Torah* as its antidote." Thus, there are two things that impact upon the evil inclination – one is in its cause and the other is in its consequence. The study of *Torah* prevents the individual from sinning, and the incense holds at bay the liability of death, which is a consequence of sin. Plague and death come about when G-d allows satan to prosecute by suspending the Attribute of Mercy.

Chazal: On *Rosh Hashanah*, G-d gives satan permission to prosecute, because it is the day of judgment. The reason the Jewish people are able to endure the prosecution is because satan is silenced by the sound of the shofar. It reminds G-d of the *Akeidah*. There are other times that G-d also allows satan to present prosecution against the Jewish people. It is when they bring prosecution upon themselves.

Chofetz Chaim: When one Jew speaks negatively about his fellow (*lashon hara*), it allows satan to prosecute. Why is this so? When satan comes before G-d and asks permission to prosecute the record of the Jewish people, he is silenced by G-d saying, "You may not speak negatively about My children." However, when the Jewish people speak negatively about one another, satan comes before G-d and says, "You do not allow

me to prosecute the Jewish people because You do not want me to speak negatively about them; however, if they are speaking negatively about one another, why can I not introduce prosecution?" Consequently, G-d allows satan to prosecute the Jewish people. *Chofetz Chaim* explains based on the Zohar that the greatest levels of tragedies and suffering come upon the Jewish people due to *lashon hara*.

Gemara in Tractate *Eirchin*: When the High Priest brought the incense offering on the golden altar (in the inner sanctuary), it atoned for the sin of *lashon hara*. Evil speech is the activator of the Attribute of Justice, through the prosecution of satan, which brings about suffering and death. Just as incense has the ability to cause plague to cease, which is due to the angel of death being silenced, it also has the ability to atone for the sin of *lashon hara*, which is the basis for prosecution resulting in death and suffering.

The only way satan can be incapacitated is either through the incense offering (as was seen with *Aaron* when he burned the incense offering in the midst of the camp) or the study of *Torah* for its own sake (*I'shma*).

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: It is not enough to only study *Torah* to incapacitate the evil inclination, one must do so without any ulterior motive (*I'shma*). It is only when *Torah* is studied on a selfless level, that it can act as the antidote against the evil inclination.

The Jewish people came with a claim against *Moshe* that the incense caused the people of G-d to die. They believed that by using the incense as a test, it was a death sentence that *Moshe* issued upon his opponents. *Moshe* wanted to explain to them that there was nothing inherent in the incense that caused them to die, but rather, it was their own innate impurity and defiance of G-d that brought about their death. This was clearly demonstrated by having *Aaron* burn the incense to halt the plague. Despite the irrefutable proof that was presented before the Jewish people, it was not sufficient for them to believe that *Aaron* and his children were the only ones qualified for the Priesthood.

Torah: G-d told *Moshe* to take a staff from every tribe with the name of the prince of that tribe inscribed upon it and put them along with *Aaron's* staff in the Tent of the Meeting. If a staff would blossom, it would indicate that the individual whose name is inscribed upon it, is truly qualified to be the Priest. *Moshe* was careful to place all of the staffs together in such a way that *Aaron's* staff was not closer than the others to the Divine Presence. If it had been put closer than the others to the Divine Presence and had sprouted, the Jewish people would attribute its sprouting to being closer to the Divine Presence. Despite witnessing all of the revealed miracles and G-d's retribution, G-d wanted proof of *Aaron's* qualification to be the *Kohen* to never be again questioned by the Jewish people.

Torah: When *Moshe* told Pharaoh that the tenth plague (killing of the first born) he said "it will take place at about midnight" (and not "exactly at midnight.")

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: "Does G-d not know when midnight is?" The *Gemara* answers that *Moshe* was concerned that the astrologers of Egypt would say based on their calculation of midnight, that the killing of the first-born did not happen exactly at midnight. It occurred a moment before or after. Thus, they would accuse *Moshe* that the plague did not occur as he had said, and thus he is a liar. Therefore, so that the Egyptian astrologers should not have this claim, *Moshe* said, "about midnight."

We see from *Moshe's* concern regarding the astrologers, that despite witnessing nine of the ten plagues happening exactly as *Moshe* had prophesized, the astrologers were still ready to not regard G-d as the Omnipotent Being if they felt the tenth plague did not occur exactly as *Moshe* had said it would. Although it would seem obvious that *Moshe's* word is the Word of G-d and *Aaron* being appointed as the High Priest was G-d's Will, it was nevertheless not sufficient to establish it as uncontested. How does one achieve clarity despite all of the pitfalls of life? It is only through the study of *Torah* (*I'shma*).



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