

32 – Chukat-Balak – Outline

Chukat-Balak Summary

- Chukat
 - Statute of the Red Heifer
 - Death of Miriam
 - Waters of Meribah
 - Edom refuses passage
 - Death of Aaron
 - Arad conquered
 - The Bronze Serpent
 - The Song of the Well
 - Defeat of Sihon and Og
- Balak
 - The Oracles of Balaam
 - The Sin of Peor

Extra Summary Thoughts

- “chukat” = “statute” (ones that would not be derive through human reasoning)
 - the enigma: why is it that if the ashes of the Red Heifer are used to purify from contamination of touching a corpse, those preparing it are rendered unclean?
- 38 years in a verse: between the statute of the Red Heifer and the beginning of the next chapter, 38 years pass
- Miriam was a great leader: “For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” (Micah 6:4).
- Moses striking the rock instead of speaking to it is important because the rock represents Yeshua: “For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Messiah” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)
 - by striking it instead of speaking to it (in that brief moment only), Moses puts himself in the position of the Jewish leaders who strike the Messiah by insisting that He be crucified; such a slight misstep by Moses has great ripples in time because generations read and study Moses’ life in the Torah. He is held to a very high standard.
- Edom is family, the descendants of Esau, so their refusal to allow Israel passage here is the opening of a family rift
- The Song of the Well
 - “Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!— the well that the princes made, that the nobles of the people dug, with the scepter and with their staffs” (Numbers 21:17-18).
 - this is considered the third of 10 archetypal songs, the first being sung by Adam (Psalm 92), and the last not having yet been sung, the “Song of the Messiah.”
 - it reveals a great growth has happened in Israel:

- God has led them to a very “low” place – the sloping valleys that lead to Ar, the city of “anguish”
- they don’t grumble for water here; instead God tells them to dig, so they have a part to play in the procuring of water
- the princes of Israel stoop low to serve, using the symbol of their high positions, their scepters, to do the digging, and the result is unity among the people, a song
- As Chukat ends and Balak begins, the nation arrives at the threshold of the Land; the next 15 Torah portions (about a quarter of the Torah) occur at the last stop, opposite Jericho

A Season of Death

- both “chukat” and “balak” speak of death
 - root of “chukat” means to chisel, to inscribe
 - the old form has to be surrendered forever as the new form is received, death to the old to receive the new
 - there is a special power for bonding to God found in the laws that are beyond human reason
 - “balak” = “dead/to cut off/to annihilate/to devastate”
- review of the season
 - the yearly equivalent of adolescence starts at Shavuot, our yearly bar or bat mitzvah, becoming accountable to the Torah
 - becoming accountable to the Torah leads to death:
 - Paul:
 - the Torah teaches what sin is
 - sin springs to life in us now that we “know”
 - we are held accountable to the Torah, and the wages of sin is death
 - the 3 Weeks of Mourning are nearly upon us – countless tragedies over history for the Jewish people
 - in high summer, the land dries up – the separation of heaven and earth
 - but death is not the end:
 - Paul: the point of this death is that sin would be recognized as utterly sinful, a dead end that leads only to frustration and separation
 - revealing sin for what it is is the first step in sin’s undoing
 - in the calendar: the 3 Weeks are quickly followed by Tu B’Av and then the 40 days of repentance starting with Elul
 - repentance is the second step of sin’s undoing
 - by God’s design, the purpose of death is that it leads to a new life, a reconnection that ends up higher than the first connection before we suffered through death

Placing the Portions

- Chukat, more than other portions, whipsaws between life and death
 - death:
 - deaths of Miriam and Aaron
 - begins with a process for cleansing from the impurity of death (Red Heifer)
 - death of 24,000 from the fiery serpents, sword, and plague
 - life/victory:
 - victory over Arad
 - the Song of the Well
 - victories over the Amorites (Sihon and Og)
 - R’Trugman: “The parsha begins with the law of the parah adumah, of how to purify someone from the impurity of death. And this ritual contains a great paradox, that those who are preparing the ingredients to purify others, they, themselves, become impure. And this is considered *THE* paradox of the Torah...There are many, many paradoxical things that happen in this parsha, and it all has to do with what’s called the “mystery of life and death.”
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jdWFw4bDe8&list=PLYztuC2svll7a9J9YTkoGt3sbn0Ku_1Xe&index=26 30 sec)
- The bottom line: while this is certainly a season of death, these portions are saying, “Death is never only about death. You cannot separate the death from the new life. They come together”
 - each topic in this portion is a mixture of death and new life
 - Red Heifer – death of the cow cleanses from death
 - Aaron transfers his authority to the new generation as he dies
 - the serpents bring death, but looking upon the bronze serpent brings life
 - the princes of Israel stoop to the lowly work of digging, and unity among the people is the result (unity in song)
- main point today: let’s get it into our heads that we must experience what feels like loss before we can receive something new from the Lord
 - when experiencing loss, trust Him; trust that within the loss, the green shoot of new life is forming; trust that He knows what He’s doing; trust that He loves us and is giving us the best for us; open your eyes to the life within the death in this season of illumination

The 4 Battles of Chukat

- what we’re seeing in these important victories under Moses is the foundation and plan of all the victories to come under Joshua
 - these “seed” victories will fully manifest under Joshua, victories in the spirit, soul, and body
 - Arad
 - the seed of the seed – contains the whole picture and all the others
 - actually in the Promised Land (southern Judah)

- conquered by Moses (victory of the Mosaic Covenant) but not occupied at that time (devoted to destruction), then conquered again under Joshua (victory of the New Covenant through Yeshua)
- “Arad” = “to sequester” and “wild donkey”
 - “sequester” is separation = death; therefore, victory here is victory over death, itself
 - “wild donkey” is the fallen flesh; therefore, victory here is victory over the fallen flesh
- Sihon
 - “sweeping away” – the intellect, human reasoning – must be conquered if we are to be established in the Land
 - located in the head
 - neshamah, seat of the intellect
- Yazer
 - “helper” – like the Ruach HaKodesh, like the emotions
 - ruach, seat of the emotions, the bridge between above and below – must be conquered if we are to be established in the Land
 - the emotions are not to lead and are not to be the main basis of our actions; they help us process our experiences; they are intermediary
- Og
 - “round” – physical comforts and pleasures – must be conquered if we are to be established in the Land
 - nephesh, seat of the instincts and drives
- 4 victories that are 4 seeds for victory in the Land
- trust that God is laying this foundation for victory now in our own lives

Balak and Balaam: The Torah’s Comedy Scene

- the Balaam story seems rather unnecessary - Israel doesn’t even know that this spiritual attack is happening
 - it’s lengthy; we should ask what it has to teach us
- it’s a comedy scene that is meant to encourage us
 - God is playing with these enemies of Israel who seek to ruin Israel like a cat plays with a mouse
 - the silliness of the situation starts with the talking donkey
 - it’s an interaction between two very haughty men
 - Balak: “I’m so rich that I can make you an “honored” man.”
 - Balaam: fancies himself a poet, introduces his “discourses” by talking about himself in the third person: “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened; The oracle of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered” (Num 24:3-4)
 - but to everyone’s amazement, he blesses rather than curses

- try to envision the fullness of the scene:
 - these 2 along with “all the leaders of Moab,” trudging from one high place to another, sweating, lugging around stones to make altars, doing sacrifices, huffing and puffing, only to hear from Balaam’s mouth: “How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel.”
- the lesson: Tim Hegg points out that it’s teaching us what an attack in the spiritual realm against Israel looks like
 - Israel is unaware- it’s happening “on the heights” overlooking the camp
 - God fights for us in the spiritual realm, actively protecting us, and more: He turns the enemies’ curses into blessings! We should be encouraged.

Yeshua

- Seeing Yeshua in several of the most important narratives here:
 - the Red Heifer
 - cleanses from the impurity of death – through Messiah’s death, death is defeated
 - slain outside the camp, as Yeshua was crucified outside the city walls
 - the answer to the enigma: it was a sin to crucify the Messiah, and sin makes one unclean; those who crucified Yeshua, however, were used of God to bring cleansing to the world; in the same way, those who prepare the Red Heifer are rendered unclean
 - the Bronze Snake
 - Yeshua says, “...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15)
 - Yeshua was made to resemble sin as He was lifted onto the cross. But in Him is life
 - “pole” = “nes,” from a root meaning “to gleam from far away”
 - Yeshua’s crucifixion is a banner lifted in time, such that those of us far away on that same battlefield, 2,000 years later, look back to it and see it, and those who came before Yeshua look forward on the same battlefield and see it, and all are healed!
 - Phinehas
 - we are looking in these stories for how the one that is dying is representing Yeshua
 - here, it’s two: Zimri and Cozbi
 - “Zimri” = “my song”
 - “Cozbi” = “untrue” or “my lie”
 - Yeshua is Zimri, Gods song that brings everything into existence moment by moment, and in taking this Midianite woman, he “puts on” the garment of the lie. It is in this state that the two are pierced through. By putting to death the lie, life is established, and the plague is ended.

32 – Chukat-Balak – Transcript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and this Spiritual Seasons series, where we are exploring how each Torah portion fits into the bigger picture of salvation that we can see in the yearly calendar. This week, we are in the double portion of Chukat and Balak, Numbers 19-25:9. Both of these portions on their own are just overflowing with topics to talk about, and taken together, we have a bit of a challenge today to even hit the highlights. So let's get to it with a summary combined with a few initial thoughts.

Chukat-Balak Summary

The name "Chukat" means "statute," and the portion begins with the statute of the Red Heifer, what the Sages have considered to be one of the greatest enigmas in the whole Torah. God commands that the ashes of a red cow be used in the process to purify someone who has come into contact with a human corpse. The mystery for the rabbis is that the priests involved in creating the ashes become unclean. So how is it that that which makes clean from such a dire ritual impurity renders the priests who do the service to create it unclean?

Between the statute of the Red Heifer and the beginning of the next chapter, 38 years pass, almost the whole experience of the wilderness journey. From Numbers 20 to the end of the Torah, Israel is going through the final preparations needed to enter the Land. Chukat, in particular, has the feeling of the beginning of the end with the deaths of Miriam and Aaron and God's pronouncement that Moses will not enter the Land.

The death of Miriam is the topic that follows the statute of the Red Heifer. The fact that the Torah records this woman's death is meaningful. She was an important leader in the generation that left Egypt. And lest we begin to doubt that, listen to the following verse from the haftarah portion in Micah: "For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Micah 6:4).

The rabbis see a connection between the death of Miriam and the lack of water that follows. The next incident in the text is the quarrel at Meribah. Meribah is puzzling for the rabbis, who question why God gives such a severe punishment to Moses when it's not quite clear what he does wrong here. The people are lacking water, and they quarrel with Moses, and God instructs Moses to speak to the rock to bring forth water for them. In the process of doing so, Moses somehow stumbles. God describes Moses' error here as a failure to treat Him as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel. For this, Moses and Aaron are both not permitted to enter the Land with Israel (Num 20:24). The rabbis focus a lot on the fact that Moses is told to speak to the rock, but he hits it instead. To more fully understand why this is such a problem, we need to remember that in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul says that the Israelites all drank the same spiritual drink in the wilderness, and he adds, "For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed

them, and the Rock was Messiah” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). The Rock in question here from which the water flows in the wilderness is a picture of the Messiah. At the moment when Moses strikes the rock rather than speaking to it, he has placed himself in the position of the Jewish leaders who strike the Messiah by insisting that He be crucified. Moses is a very upright and holy figure, and his life is recorded in the Torah and preserved for us to study and learn from. He is held to an immensely high standard. For the great leader Moses, any deviation from God’s word creates vast ripples throughout time and space. He’s not perfect, obviously. But in this case in particular, in God’s eyes, this momentary and veiled placing of himself in the position of the religious leaders who insisted upon Yeshua’s crucifixion is truly momentous.

Let me tack on a fascinating point here about the Waters of Meribah and this Rock: as I mentioned, the rabbis have seen a connection between Miriam and this Rock. They say that the rock brings forth water in the merit of Miriam and that Israel lacks water at this point in the story because Miriam has just died. Now, since we see from the Apostolic Scriptures that the Rock is a picture of Messiah, we can sense that something is a bit cloudy in that interpretation. But the picture comes into focus when we take another piece of information from the gospels, the fact that Yeshua’s mother is named “Mary,” which is the Hebrew name “Miriam.” The rabbis see a connection between Miriam and the Rock, and this is because Miriam pictures Mary. And so in a very real way, Miriam DOES HAVE A ROLE in the bringing forth of the water from the Rock in the same way that Mary has a role in bringing forth the Rock, Itself, Who is the Messiah. It’s an amazing connection that the rabbis are seeing here with Miriam, though we might be prone to ignore such an insight or even to sneer at this kind of thinking a bit, wondering where they come up with this stuff. We need to be humble in receiving the ancient wisdom. When the fullness of Scripture sheds its light on both the Torah and the studies of the Jewish people over the centuries, we start to see connections and more connections, and a great light begins to emerge from all the details of Scripture. Praise the Lord for opening up the whole breadth of Scripture to us so that the wisdom of the two flocks can be combined to illuminate each other!

The action doesn’t slow down in parsha Chukat. Next we have the story of how Edom refuses to allow Israel to pass through their territory. Edom’s refusal here smarts a bit because Edom is a cousin nation to Israel. Edom is one of the names given to Jacob’s twin brother Esau. These people are descendants of both Abraham and Isaac through Isaac’s son Esau. They lived in the rugged regions immediately south and southeast of the Land of Canaan. So there is a rift that opens up in the family here.

Next we have the death of Aaron. God instructs Moses to take Aaron and his son Eleazar up Mt. Hor. Once there, he is to remove Aaron’s garments and put them on Eleazar before he is gathered to his people. Imagine the great weight of such a moment. These two brothers, old now, had been through so much together. Here now they stand on a mountaintop with one from the next generation to be entrusted with the leadership of the nation, and as Moses removes each piece of holy clothing, Aaron comes closer and closer to God taking him away. Did Moses tarry at all in the task of unmaking his older brother? I’d like to think that with each article of the holy clothing transferred to Eleazar, Aaron’s soul grew lighter and lighter, his eyes

brighter and brighter, his joy greater. Moses and Eleazar eventually come down the mountain together, but without Aaron, the beloved first High Priest of the nation. And the people mourn for thirty days, as they will also do for Moses a bit later.

Next, the king of Arad comes out to fight Israel, taking some Israelites captive. Israel vows to devote his cities to destruction if God will give them victory. And He does give them victory. You can go today to see the ancient ruined Canaanite city of Arad. It is not far from the modern city of the same name, where I had the privilege to live for a while.

Moving on in the text, the people are discouraged that they have to travel around Edom. They speak against God and Moses, and God sends fiery serpents which kill many. They repent, announcing more clearly than ever that they have sinned. God instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent and affix it to a pole. When the people are bitten by a snake, they look at the bronze snake and live. Israel dies in a number of ways in the wilderness, but this episode is unique for its terror and its in-your-face symbolism.

Next the narrative turns positive as we have the Song of the Well, which the people sing after God gathers them together to receive water. The song is only three short lines: “Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!— the well that the princes made, that the nobles of the people dug, with the scepter and with their staffs” (Numbers 21:17-18). Despite its brevity, this is considered one of the 10 archetypal songs sung since the beginning of time. The first is a Psalm said to have been sung by Adam, Psalm 92. The Song of the Well is the third. According to the ancient wisdom, nine of the songs have already been sung, and we now await the 10th, which is called the “Song of the Messiah.”

The Song of the Well reveals the great growth the nation has undergone in the wilderness. There is no talk of grumbling here about water, first of all. The people breaking out in song is, itself, a picture of great unity, and greater unity comes with each step of maturity. The beauty of this song is that it isn't just God providing water from a rock, as before. It's like God has led Israel to some dusty, parched place, a dead place, which is described by the place names that lead up to the song. It talks about going down into valleys and further mentions the slope of the valleys that lead to the seat of Ar, the city of anguish. And in that very low place, God says, “Trust Me. Dig here.” Rather than simply providing the water, He wants them to have a role to play, a role that requires faith and faithfulness, faithful effort over time. And the song says that the NOBLES of the people dug, but not with shovels. They took the scepters that were a sign of their authority, the sign of their high position, and they stooped low to serve the people. It was the nobles that used their scepters to dig...and dig...and dig. It is not an easy thing to dig in dry, rocky ground. And after much effort, the water began to creep into the hole, and the rejoicing went up as a song. The people were unified through these faithful exertions of the leaders. It's a simple few lines, but what an image!

Finally in parsha Chukat, we have the defeat of the Amorites east of the Jordan, most notably the kingdoms of Sihon and Og.

As Chukat ends and Balak begins, the nation arrives at the threshold of the Land, encamped opposite Jericho in the plains of Moab. The next 15 parshas, amounting to more than a quarter of all the Torah portions, take place while Israel is at this final stop in their long 40-year journey.

Whereas Chukat spans 38 years and is filled with momentous events that are each given only a handful of verses, Balak is the telling of one story, in two parts. It's the record of how a Moabite king tries to derail God's plan for His chosen people. Balak first hires the famous Gentile prophet Balaam to curse Israel. Much to both Balak's and Balaam's chagrin, Balaam blesses Israel instead, four times. We know from other places in Scripture that Balaam eventually gives Balak the wicked advice to send in the Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men and lead them into idolatry. The plan works, and 24,000 who had sinned in this way end up dying by the swords of their brothers and by a plague sent by God. The portion ends when Aaron's grandson Phinehas drives a spear through an Israelite man and the Midianite woman he had taken into his tent.

A Season of Death

Let's start placing these portions in the flow of the calendar by beginning where we often do, with the meaning of the parsha names. "Chukat," as I mentioned before, means "statute." It's from a root that means "to engrave" or "to inscribe," to write by cutting away. A "chok" is not just a law; it's a law that mankind wouldn't ever come up with on its own, one that doesn't make sense to us using human logic. The statute of the Red Heifer doesn't seem to make sense to us. It's not something we would have come up with on our own. We can come up with "do not murder" on our own, but not "take a red cow outside the camp and burn it and use its ashes mixed with water to purify a person who has had to make contact with a human corpse." The idea of a chok is that because of the incongruity of it, because of our inability to understand it, obedience to a chok carries a special kind of power with it, an enhanced power to make us one with God's Word and God, Himself. It's one thing to do a commandment that we understand. But a higher level of bonding results from doing a commandment that is baffling to us, but one that we do anyway because we trust God, come what may. Let others scorn us. We will do what God says and trust that it is life for us.

But for our purposes in placing these portions in the flow of the calendar, I want to point out that engraving requires changing the substrate forever. It's not that way when ink is applied to parchment. Ink on parchment is less permanent. It doesn't change the actual parchment beneath to the same degree. The ink essentially sits on top of the parchment. When a thing is engraved, on the other hand, the old form is surrendered at the same time that the new form is created. Material is removed, and there's no putting that back. There's not much that can be done to erase what is done after the violence of chisel and hammer area applied to stone. The substrate is forever changed. In fact, if we're giving free will to the stone that is chiseled – and WE ARE THE STONE, by the way – we could say that the stone has to submit to a kind of DEATH in order to embrace a new life in which the word has become part of it. It's a beautiful idea, really. And it speaks of complete surrender in order to bear the Word on our lives, in order to become the living word. So my point here about the name "Chukat" is that it's about death and new life.

Likewise, the name “Balak” is also about death. A bit similar in meaning to the root of “chukat,” “Balak” means “to cut off,” but “Balak” carries the connotation of “to annihilate” or “to devastate.” The Kehot Chumash lists the simple word “dead” as a meaning. Both of these parsha names, then, bring a connotation of death.

Well, what does death have to do with this season? Let’s review some of what we have already established in previous teachings about this spiritual season. The important ideas here can be summed up by the concept of adolescence, that phase of human development that we are associating with the spiritual season that starts with Shavuot, which is a kind of bar or bat mitzvah every year. The receiving of the Torah, or becoming personally responsible to Torah, is a wonderful and necessary transition moment from childhood to young adulthood, but it also is the beginning of a battle that involves dying, death. To take some liberties to summarize Paul, the Torah teaches us what sin is. And once it does, sin takes advantage of the clarity and knowledge and obligation of the Torah to springs up in us, and the battle is really on at that point; the war with the flesh really flares up in us at this point because now we know with clarity what sin is, and from this point on, we know that choosing to indulging the flesh is choosing to sin. And once we know, we are held accountable to a greater degree. And being held accountable means that we incur THE WAGES OF SIN, which is death. So it is that the receiving of the Torah leads to death.

And here we are in the season that follows Shavuot. It is, indeed, a season of death. We soon will begin the 3 Weeks, the period of great mourning in the calendar when Israel has suffered unspeakable loss throughout history. And what is happening in us spiritually is being reflected at this time in the physical Land, which is the body of Israel, as Israel endures the long dry season now. The rains have stopped, and the earth turns yellow and leaves drop as many plants go dormant. The heavens and the earth are separated from each other, and separation is death.

But death is not the end. Paul says that the point of this death is that sin would be recognized for what it is, utterly sinful, a dead end that leads only to frustration and separation. Revealing sin for what it is is the first step in its undoing. Soon after this revelation, we are brought to repentance, the next step. In the calendar, the Three Weeks are soon followed by the joyous celebration of Tu B’Av and then the 40 days of repentance that start in the 6th month of Elul and continue through the 10 Days of Awe. By God’s design, the purpose of death is that it leads to new life, a new life that is higher than before. Let me say that again: by God’s design, the purpose of death is that it leads to a new life, a reconnection that ends up higher than the first connection before we suffered through death.

Placing the Portions

All of that brings us back to our double portion and these two names that speak of death, “Chukat” and “Balak.” When I read Chukat this year, I came away with the feeling that this portion more than others whipsaws back and forth between death and life. First I focused on death for the obvious reasons: both Miriam and Aaron die in this portion, and Moses is given a

kind of death sentence here, too. Not only that, but the portion begins with cleansing from the impurity of touching a corpse, the law of the Red Heifer, which sets the tone for the whole portion. And we have the dramatic incident of the fiery serpents where 24,000 die. Even the story with Edom is a kind of death of relationship for Israel. The 38 years that pass by in Chukat have as their main goal the death of a generation that doubted God when the 12 spies gave their report. Death sticks out all over like grave stones in this portion.

But when you look a bit closer, the other stories here seem very different, the conquering of Arad, the beautiful Song of the Well, and the victories over the Amorites east of the Jordan. These feel less like death and more like victory! And so, again, it feels like the portion is filled with the paradox of life and death intermingled.

After kind of pondering this mixture of death and life for a bit, I listened to a teaching by R'Trugman in which he brings forth the view of the rabbis on the portion. And he says this: "The parsha begins with the law of the parah adumah, of how to purify someone from the impurity of death. And this ritual contains a great paradox, that those who are preparing the ingredients to purify others, they, themselves, become impure. And this is considered *THE* paradox of the Torah...There are many, many paradoxical things that happen in this parsha, and it all has to do with what's called the "mystery of life and death."

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So, here's the bottom line: while this is certainly a season of death, these portions are saying, "Death is never only about death. You cannot separate the death from the new life. They come together." And this is the essence of everything in this portion. Listen for this mixture of death and life as I quickly run through each topic again. The death of the Red Heifer removes the impurity of death, restoring connection to God, which is life. Aaron passes away, but as he does so, he empowers his son to take his place. An entire generation passes away as another is being born in the 40 years in the wilderness. Moses loses the chance to enter the Land, but in this portion, he actually does enter the Land, not just to visit but to conquer a king whose territory is within the boundaries of the Promised Land, the King of Arad. The serpent is death, but in looking to the One Who is lifted up on the tree, the figure made by human hands to look like a serpent, there is life from the dead. The princes of Israel stoop to the lowly work of digging a well, humbling themselves, and the whole nation is raised up to unified song. Balaam opens his mouth to curse, but instead what comes out is life, a multitude of poetic blessings.

Here's the main point today; let's get this into our heads: we must experience what feels like loss before we can receive something new from the Lord. Before we can grow in Him, we must be pruned by Him. As we struggle in those low places where we know our lives have changed, where we know that God has taken away the place of comfort that we worked so hard to secure, we must also open our eyes to see the new life that He is bringing with the death. It is the season of illumination. He will help you to see now. When a path comes to an end, when a dream leads to nothing but heartache, when a relationship breaks down, when a business goes belly up, trust that the miracle of God is at work, that the green shoot of life is already in the

process of breaking through that black earth. Trust Him. Trust that He knows what He's doing. Trust that He loves you and is giving you what is best for you. Open your eyes.

The 4 Battles of Chukat

Well, after this placing of the portions in the calendar, I want to move on to one of these progressions that I find truly fascinating. We can call it the 4 Battles of parsha Chukat. What we're seeing in these important victories under Moses is the foundation and plan of all the victories to come under Joshua. And those triumphs to come will include victories in all areas of Israel's being – spirit, soul, and body. Let me suggest that the victories over Arad, Sihon, and Og are to be read as seeds that God gives Israel in the final days of Moses' leadership. Israel will take these seeds of victory in battle and invest them, and they will bear the greater and more tangible fruit of the conquest of the Land.

Let's briefly go through each of these victories. As I mentioned before, Arad is actually in the Promised Land. It becomes a part of the southern part of Judah. It's conquered under Moses, but the people don't inhabit that territory at this time because it's devoted to destruction. So it will need to be conquered again under Joshua. Arad is the seed of the seed, the one that contains everything else. In first Moses then Joshua conquering Arad, we see the efficacy of both the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant that comes through Yeshua.

"Arad" means "to sequester," the idea of standing aloof by oneself, and it also is the word for "wild donkey." "Sequester" is the idea of separation, which is death. Victory over Arad is victory over death. "Wild donkey," on the other hand, is a description of the fallen flesh. The Rabash says that "Man is born a wild donkey." But in the end, "he will achieve the degree of 'man.'" What the Rabash means is that man is born mostly selfish, mostly thinking of himself, like an animal. But in the end, he learns how to think of the needs of others, and this makes him uniquely human. And so, in conquering Arad, we have both victory over death and victory over the flesh. You see, the whole picture is here.

Moving on to Sihon and Og, "Sihon" means "sweeping away," and Grant has taught us over the years that Sihon and his kingdom represent the human intellect, which is seated in the mind. We absolutely must overcome our need to understand everything before we will obey. God's ways are higher than our ways, and praise the Lord for that. Og, on the hand, means "round," and everything about him and his kingdom speak of the desire for physical comforts and pleasures, seated in the belly. This, too, must be overcome if we are to have victory in the Promised Land. We can say that under Joshua, the seed that is victory over Sihon unfolds as the southern campaign in the Land, and the victory over Og unfolds as the northern campaign.

But I have left one out. Scripture over and over again emphasizes these two, Sihon and Og. But we always have a connector between these two, the middle ground between the neshamah that is higher and the nephesh that is lower. Between the two is the ruach, which goes back and forth. We have connected the ruach to the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, and also to the emotions. The emotions are seated in the heart and are affected by both the mind and the gut. Well, what do we find in the text here? Is there anything between Sihon and Og? Indeed, we

find a third king between these two, though he isn't mentioned much. His name is "Yazer." "Yazer" means "helper." And doesn't that sound like the Ruach, the Comforter, the Tutor? "Helper" is also a good way to think of the emotions. Grant has many times told us that our emotions are there to help us process what we are experiencing. We are not to be led by our emotions. On the other side, we are also not to ACT chiefly from our emotions. Like Joseph who saw his brother Benjamin and rushed out to weep, then after he had washed his face, he returned to his brothers and said, "Serve the food," we allow ourselves to experience the emotions because that helps us to process what's happening, but then we gain mastery of ourselves, and only after we are in control do we act. The emotions help us to bridge what the mind perceives and what we end up doing.

And so once again, the 4 victories of this portion are the seeds of a thorough victory in all parts of Israel's being: spirit, soul, and body, in that order. As we read about these victories now, at this point in the year, we can be encouraged that God is busily laying the foundation for a greater victory to come in our lives as the year marches onward.

The Torah's Comedy Scene

There's so much more to say about these portions, but before we conclude with some thoughts about Yeshua, I want to turn to focus a bit on portion Balak. The bumbblings of Balak and Balaam are meant to be a great encouragement to us. What I want us to see here in these few moments is that this whole story with Balaam is the Torah's version of a comedy scene. But as with everything else in the Torah, it's a comedy scene that speaks life to us in a profound way.

First of all, the story seems rather unnecessary. Israel doesn't even know that this spiritual attack is happening. While most of the action is taking place in the heights, Israel is oblivious down below, encamped on the plains of Moab. And it's not a short story. The Torah devotes quite a bit of text to it. We need to ask what God intends to teach us through this portion.

So, why am I calling this a comedy scene? Well, God is toying with these enemies of Israel. He's playing with them like a cat with a mouse. It starts with Balaam asking God if he should go to help Balak. God clearly says, "No." But Balaam comes back a second time to say, "Are You sure?" After giving Balaam the chance to do the right thing, this time God allows him to go because He will use him as a symbol of what NOT to do for thousands of years. On the road, God decides to open the mouth of Balaam's donkey, and the silliness of the situation begins.

What follows is a hilarious interaction between two very haughty men. Balak speaks of his great ability to "honor" Balaam, meaning he can make him very rich. He's saying, "Don't you know how rich and powerful I am? And I can make you honored like me!" And for his part, Balaam fancies himself a poet, apparently. The text keeps saying how he "takes up his discourse." It's like he moves to center stage, clears his throat importantly, and graces everyone with his lofty words in which he keeps talking about himself in the third person. He starts one "discourse" or "oracle" by saying about himself, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened; The oracle of him who hears the words of God, Who

sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered” (Num 24:3-4). And much to everyone’s amazement, he proceeds to bless Israel rather than curse them. And the angels are chuckling in heaven.

Try to envision the fullness of the scene here. Here these two are with all the leaders of Moab, no less, trudging from one high place to another, sweating their way up these slippery mountains, lugging around stones to set up seven altars here and seven altars there and going through the exhausting work of offering seven bulls and seven rams each time, then everyone stands there probably covered in the mess of these offerings and huffing and puffing and waiting expectantly for the curses to come flying out of Balaam’s mouth like venom, only to hear, “How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel.” “Wa wa.” They’re dumbfounded.

Tim Hegg points out that the fact that Israel can’t see what is happening and that it’s happening on the heights overlooking the camp indicates that we’re seeing a picture of an attack from the spiritual realm here. We know that our battle is chiefly a spiritual one. Clearly Balaam is a prophet who has an unusual connection to the spiritual realm. And what we need to see here and be encouraged by here is the fact that God protects Israel against this spiritual attack. They never even know what’s happening. In fact, what Balak meant for evil, God turns into a blessing, four blessings! And such words! Balaam ends up speaking out Israel’s whole history from her separation to be a holy nation, to her multiplication in number, to her rising up to take the Land, to her settling down in the Land and becoming fruitful there, and finally to the coming of the Messiah and Israel’s rulership over the nations. In fact, the Kehot Chumash points out that what ends up coming out of Balaam’s mouth is the most explicit reference in the five books of Torah to the Messiah. Here, Balaam refers to Him as a Star that comes out of Jacob and a Scepter that rises out of Israel. Some of Balaam’s words here come to be repeated for hundreds and thousands of years in the daily prayers! And his intentions were to harm Israel! You just have to shake your head at this and smile. This is God’s humor. And it is life for Israel.

So let’s be encouraged from this story that God is actively protecting us from spiritual attack and that He’s even turning the attacks of our enemies into great blessings. Now, Balaam does end up giving advice to Balak that results in the deaths of many in Israel. And every death is tragic. But those deaths end up being the final purging of Israel before the new census is taken and they go into the Land. With this incident of the sin of Peor and the deaths of the 24,000, the dying is done. Those who had succumbed to that final temptation and who tumbled into idolatry were surgically removed from the nation, and they were stronger for it.

Yeshua

Well, let’s turn our attention now to Yeshua. In going deeper with seeing Yeshua in this discussion, I want to focus on seeing Him in several of the most important narratives here. First, we have the Red Heifer. This chok might be a conundrum to the rabbis, but to the Believer, we see that everything about it speaks of the Messiah. Remember that the purpose of the Red Heifer is to cleanse from the impurity of death. It is through the MESSIAH’S death that death is defeated. Like the Red Heifer, He is slain outside the camp. Killing Him was the greatest sin, and

sin defiles. And this is the answer to the riddle of the Red Heifer, why it is that the priests who prepare the Red Heifer are rendered unclean. Their act of murder was a sin that defiles, but what they were used to prepared in that sin was the remedy to death for the whole world.

The connections between Yeshua and the bronze snake are not hard to see, either. Yeshua says in John 3, "...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Yeshua was made to resemble sin as He was lifted onto the cross. But in Him is life.

There's a beautiful subtext here in the Hebrew word used for "pole" in this story. It's the word "nes," which throughout the Tanakh is usually translated as "banner" or "standard." The root of "nes" has the core idea of "to gleam from far away." Something that is lifted up as a banner is meant to be visible from far away. Picture Yeshua's act like a "nes" on the battlefield, a banner that is lifted up in time. We are on that battlefield at what is now a great distance in time from His gift to mankind, more than 2,000 years of distance. But as we battle in our time, we look back over our shoulders to that gleaming light of the crucifixion. And there it is! It's still standing there, that miracle, that salvation, proudly raised high. And those who lived BEFORE Yeshua were on the same battlefield, and they looked ahead of them to see the gleam of Yeshua on the cross. They look ahead on the field, and we look behind to see that same banner. And in seeing it, all of us are healed.

Lastly, let's say a few words about Phinehas and Yeshua. We are looking in these stories for how the one that is dying is representing Yeshua. Here, we have two who Phinehas spears through. The Israelite man is named "Zimri," and the Midianite woman is named "Cozbi." How do these two speak of Yeshua? "Zimri" means "my song." "Cozbi" means "untrue" or "my lie." "My song" is Yeshua. He is the song that God sings that brings creation into existence moment by moment. In taking a woman named "untrue," or "my lie," we see what Yeshua did on the cross: He put on the clothing of the lie. And in that state, the two are pierced through. And so by putting to death the lie, life is established, and the plague is ended.

Well, that's plenty for us to ponder today. Thank you for listening. I will post a link to an outline of today's teaching below the video. May we be a people of vision to see with the eyes of faith how God brings death in order to bring new life, always. May God bless us to be a people who do not fear our enemies but who fear only the One Who holds all things in His hand. May He open our eyes to ever more see Yeshua in the Word and the world. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.

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