

חֻקָּת

Chuqqat

(statute)

B'midbar 19:1-22:1

Miryam Dies

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:1

And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Tzin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miryam died there, and was buried there.

Now here is a curious verse. Miryam (Miriam) was the older sister of Moshe and Aharon and she was also looked up to and followed by many people. Yet, here we see that her death is recorded with only one sentence (one verse).

Miryam was one of the very few people that was left from the generation that had believed the evil report. We are not specifically told that she believed the evil report of the ten spies, but we can rightly deduce that she did, because she died with that generation and did not enter into the Promised Land.

Complaining Again!

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:2-5

2 And there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves together against Moshe and against Aharon.

3 And the people strove with Moshe, and spoke, saying, "Would that we had died when our brethren died before YHWH!"

4 And why have you brought the assembly of YHWH into this wilderness, that we should die there, we and our beasts?

5 And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in to this evil place? It is not a place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink."

With the death of Miryam, the rock that had been producing water for the last 38 years stopped producing water. But why would YHWH stop the water coming out of the rock after 38 years? And why did He stop the water flow at the death of Miryam in particular? What is YHWH trying to say in this?

Let us consider the close connection between the name of Miryam and the Hebrew word for water – מים (mayim). With just the addition of the letter ר – resh after the first מ – mem, the word מים changes into מרים. With this in mind, let us consider this passage.

Yochanan [John] 4:10-14

10 Yeshua answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of Elohim, and who it is that says to you, 'Give Me drink'; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water."

11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where then have You this living water?"

12 Are You greater than our father Ya'aqov, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

13 Yeshua answered and said to her, "Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again;

14 but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

This encounter of Yeshua with the Samaritan woman at this well, helps us to bring into proper focus what was happening back in the wilderness when another woman, Miryam, died. When Miryam died, the water stopped flowing. When Miryam was living, the water flowed. Perhaps YHWH was trying to get His people to not be focused upon the physical, but rather upon the spiritual. It seems that He was painting a spiritual picture for them to see, if they had eyes to see it.

Yes, we all need physical water to live. But how much more do we need the spiritual living water to live? Without this living water, we cannot have, and will not have, eternal life. But rather than seeing this wonderful picture, the people almost immediately began complaining and grumbling. So much so, that they did not even take the time to mourn the death of Miryam.

There is a word play in these verses telling us about the death of Miryam (מרים) and the water (מים) and the name of this place, Meribah (מריבה), which was given to it because of the people's contention over the water. Whenever we see such a play on words, YHWH is drawing our attention to them to teach us something important. We do not want to miss this lesson.

There must be something about everyday miracles that causes people to complain! What else could it be? These people experienced miracles every single day. The miracle of the manna falling every day except Shabbat, was a special kind of miracle. Then when the manna was gathered on yom sheeshee (sixth day) it was preserved through Shabbat.

Then, there was the miracle of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. All they had to do was look towards the mishkan and they could see His visible Presence. This miracle was with them

constantly and continually throughout their journeys. And surely they could not so quickly forget the miracles that set them free from the bondage of Egypt. Or the many other miracles that they all witnessed since YHWH had sent Moshe into their midst.

Yet, when one reads these accounts, it almost seems as though there must not have been any miracles at all because of all their complaining. It seems obvious that the miracles had no bearing on the fact that they complained a lot. Their complaining was actually a reflection of the condition of their hearts, which seems to be something that was not pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Immediate Intercession

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:6

And Moshe and Aharon went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tent of meeting, and fell upon their faces; and the glory of YHWH appeared to them.

Each and every one of us should pause right here and say a prayer of thanksgiving to YHWH for His righteous leaders that He sets over us, especially for their faithfulness to Him and to us in interceding for us.

Please note that in verse two, all these people gathered against Moshe and Aharon, which as we saw in last week's Parasha, was viewed by YHWH as gathering against Him. There is a vast difference between a self-appointed leader and a leader who is raised up by YHWH. Korach was one such self-appointed leader and we saw what happened to him.

One thing that we need to learn from all of this, is that there really is a right way and a wrong way to do things. YHWH has given us His Torah in order for us to know and do things in the right way, His way. But if we ignore this, then we are in trouble – big time trouble!

YHWH Gives Instructions

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:7-8

7 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying,

8 "Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you, and Aharon your brother, and you speak to the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water; and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock; so you shall give the congregation and their cattle drink."

YHWH now spoke to Moshe and told him what He wanted him to do. He was to take Aharon's rod that had budded and carry it before the people. This would have been a visible reminder of their previous sin of grumbling and complaining and how YHWH had caused Aharon's rod to bud to show without any

doubts who were His chosen leaders. As soon as the people would have seen the rod that budded, they would have immediately been reminded of their previous sin. Furthermore, they would have known that they had sinned again.

In chapter 17 the Scripture indicates that this rod that had budded and produced fruit overnight was to be kept before the testimony as a sign to the people. The indications strongly suggest that this rod would stay in its present state of being leafy and bearing fruit in perpetuity.

Moshe was to go up to the rock and speak to the rock, at which point water would pour forth from the rock once again for the people and their flocks and herds.

Please note that in verse 8, YHWH uses the definite article in describing “the rock”, indicating to us that it was a particular rock that He was speaking about. It was the same rock that had been with them for all their wilderness journeys. It was the same rock that water had been flowing out of for the last 38 years. Shaul in 1st Corinthians 10:4 tells us that this rock was Mashiach, indicating to us the seriousness of Moshe’s sin.

Question: Who was going to cause water to flow forth from that rock? YHWH, of course!

Yet if one will notice, in verse eight YHWH speaking to Moshe states, that it was Moshe who was going to do this task, and that it was Moshe who was going to be giving the people and cattle water to drink.

This is just one more instance in which it was YHWH working through His people to accomplish His will.

Moshe Obeys – Sort of

B’midbar [Numbers] 20:9-11

9 And Moshe took the rod from before YHWH, as He commanded him.

10 And Moshe and Aharon gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said unto them, “Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?”

11 And Moshe lifted up his hand, and smote the rock with his rod twice: and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle.

Moshe did right (obeyed) when he went in and took Aharon’s rod that had budded.

Moshe did right (obeyed) when he carried the rod before the people to the rock.

It is understandable why he said what he said to the people.

The problem was, that speaking to the people in this instance was not commanded!

Moshe was commanded to speak to the rock, not to the people. Here was the beginning of his sin.

Then Moshe lifted up Aharon's rod that had budded, that leafy green bough full of almonds in the sight of all the people, and struck the rock, not once, but twice.

I am sure that most of us can identify with Moshe's feelings of anger. But the anger of man cannot accomplish the will of YHWH.

This passage actually is a clear indication of YHWH's love and compassion for His people. Even though the leader sinned, He was faithful to His people and gave them water in spite of Moshe's sin.

YHWH Bans Moshe and Aharon from the Promised Land

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:12-13

12 And YHWH said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

13 These are the waters of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with YHWH, and He was sanctified in them.

This may seem like a rather harsh judgment to us, but we must consider the facts of this incident carefully.

Fact #1 – Moshe did not follow His instructions as He gave them.

Fact #2 – Moshe added to His commandment as He gave it by speaking to the people.

Fact #3 – Moshe took away from His commandment as He gave it by not speaking to the rock.

Fact #4 – Moshe took a set-apart object (Aharon's rod) and treated it in a way that was not set-apart by striking the rock.

Fact #5 – Moshe did not treat YHWH as Set-apart before the people, by saying to the people that it was him and his doing which was about to bring forth the water, rather than giving YHWH all the honor and glory for this miracle.

Edom Deals Harshly with Israel

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:14-21

14 And Moshe sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, "Thus says your brother Israel, 'You know all the travail that has befallen us;

15 how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and our fathers;

16 and when we cried to YHWH, He heard our voice, and sent a messenger, and brought us forth out of Egypt; and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost part of your border.

17 Please, let us pass through your land; we will not pass through field or through vineyard; neither will we drink of the water of the wells; we will go along the king's highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed your border.”

18 And Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through me, lest I come out with the sword against you.”

19 And the children of Israel said to him, “We will go up by the highway; and if we drink of your water, I and my cattle, then will I give the price thereof; let me only, without doing anything else, pass through on my feet.”

20 And he said, “You shall not pass through.” And Edom came out against him with many people, and with a strong hand.

21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; therefore Israel turned away from him.

This seems like a pretty simple request by Israel to their blood relatives, the Edomites. However, for some reason, they came out against them and turned them away. This poor choice on their part would cost them more than they realized at that time, even though it was their land given to them by YHWH; this choice was poor stewardship on their part.

Ovadyah [Obadiah] 1:10

“Because of violence to your brother Ya’aqov [Jacob], you will be covered with shame, and you will be cut off forever.”

The lesson that we should take away from this particular passage, is that we should not stand against His people. The cost for doing so is very high. The cost is the sure exclusion of eternal life.

Instructions Concerning Aharon

B’midbar [Numbers] 20:22-26

22 And they journeyed from Kadesh; and the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came to mount Hor.

23 And YHWH spoke to Moshe and Aharon in mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom, saying,

24 “Aharon shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the waters of Meribah.

25 Take Aharon and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to mount Hor;

26 and strip Aharon of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aharon shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there.”

It was time for Aharon to pass on his duties to his son. It was time for him to die. Because of his involvement in the striking of the rock and not giving all the glory and honor to YHWH, he was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

YHWH gives Moshe some very specific instructions on what to do. Please note that Moshe followed them very well, unlike the last time YHWH gave him instructions.

Aharon Dies and The Nation Mourns

B'midbar [Numbers] 20:27-29

27 And Moshe did as YHWH commanded; and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

28 And Moshe stripped Aharon of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aharon died there on the top of the mount; and Moshe and Eleazar came down from the mount.

29 And when all the congregation saw that Aharon was dead, they wept for Aharon thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

This chapter (20) opens with the death of Miryam. We are not told much about the events surrounding her death. This same chapter closes with the death of her brother Aharon. It takes eight verses to record this death and we are also told that the entire Nation mourned for a whole month.

This is quite a contrast. It should be noted in this contrast, that when Miryam died, a notable daily miracle ceased, the water flowing from the rock, which seems to have completely distracted the people from the death of one of their beloved leaders. However, no such incident is tied to the death of Aharon.

While Miryam had a significant role in Israel, her role was not nearly as visible as that of Aharon. The place in the life of this Nation that Aharon played was extremely important.

The Price of Sin

The incident of the ten spies giving an evil report and causing the people to sin against YHWH had some very far reaching effects. It should be pointed out that YHWH specifically stated at that time that only two men of that generation would be allowed to enter into His Land. The two men who would enter into His land did not include either Moshe or Aharon. When we come to this Parasha that statement takes on a very prophetic aura. Of course YHWH knew that Moshe and Aharon would not be going into His Land. One wonders what Moshe and Aharon thought at that moment of YHWH declaring who would and who would not enter into His land when they were not included in the very short list of names to enter into His Land.

So we have come to the end of their wilderness wanderings and it is getting close to the time to enter into the Land. Almost everyone of the generation that sinned has died. Only a very few remain. Miryam is one of the old ones. She is the older sister of Moshe and Aharon. It is her time to die.

Moshe and Aharon then fail to keep YHWH set-apart in the people's eyes and are excluded from entering His Land. Aharon dies soon after this sin and his son becomes the kohen gadol (high priest).

The Edomites could have received a great blessing if they would have allowed Israel to pass through their land. But, instead they chose poorly and became cursed by YHWH for their violence against His people.

The sin and its consequences that are recorded in this chapter are for our instruction and benefit. Basically, it is up to each and every one of us to choose whether we will be entering into His Land soon. Or, will we exclude ourselves by sin? It is one thing to try to do our best and falter. This we all do. YHWH blesses our feeble efforts. However, to deliberately complain, rebel, and just plain disobey Him, He will not tolerate.

Some Closing Thoughts

The Nation of Israel is getting ready to enter into His Land. There are decisions being made in this Parasha that determine who enters and who does not.

YHWH is calling us out of Babylon. Most of the people that will read this Parasha this week, have heard that call, and are in various stages of responding to His Voice. The question before each and every one of us is: will we continue to respond to His Voice and come all the way out of Babylon? Or, will we stop and go back into Babylon?

This is a question that each of us will answer. We will answer it not only with our words, but especially with our actions! I cannot answer it for you and you cannot answer it for me.

As we continue to respond in the affirmative to His Voice in all matters, one thing that will happen is that He will continue to purify each one of us, and He will form us into the image of His Son, Yeshua our Mashiach.

As things in this world go from bad to worse, we will all be faced with choices and temptations to either come completely into the camp of His people or to move away from them. The temptation will be to try to sit on the fence. As things begin breaking down in society a scapegoat will be put forth to take the blame for what is happening in the world. And of course that blame will be moved to those who try their best to live for Him and try their best to obey His commandments. As this blame is shifted onto His

people, things will most likely get pretty bad for those who follow YHWH. There will be many nominal followers who will try to sit on the fence and keep one foot in both worlds: one foot in His camp because they really do know that is the only way to have eternal life; and one foot in the world in an attempt to avoid persecution and possible imprisonment and possible death. However, attempting to do this will only result in separation from His people and separation from true eternal life. One can only expect to receive His protection and covering if one is fully and completely in His camp.

It is up to us to be a part of what He is doing in our day. Or, we can choose to exclude ourselves.

My hope and prayer is that each one of us will make the right choices to be included in putting together His Kingdom.

ABBA YHWH, please open our ears so that we can hear clearly Your Voice and to respond in ways that are pleasing to you. Grant us the obedience to Your Voice that we need to build your Kingdom; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom.

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