

Hukkat

Numbers 19:1 - 22:1

This translation was taken from the JPS Tanakh

Chapter 19

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ² This is the ritual law that the Lord has commanded:

Instruct the Israelite people to bring you a red cow without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which no yoke has been laid. ³ You shall give it to Eleazar the priest. It shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. ⁴ Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. ⁵ The cow shall be burned in his sight—its hide, flesh, and blood shall be burned, its dung included—⁶ and the priest shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson stuff, and throw them into the fire consuming the cow. ⁷ The priest shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water; after that the priest may reenter the camp, but he shall be unclean until evening. ⁸ He who performed the burning shall also wash his garments in water, bathe his body in water, and be unclean until evening. ⁹ A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the cow and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, to be kept for water of lustration for the Israelite community. It is for cleansing. ¹⁰ He who gathers up the ashes of the cow shall also wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

This shall be a permanent law for the Israelites and for the strangers who reside among you.

¹¹ He who touches the corpse of any human being shall be unclean for seven days. ¹² He shall cleanse himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day, and then be clean; if he fails to cleanse himself on the third and seventh days, he shall not be clean. ¹³ Whoever touches a corpse, the body of a person who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the Lord's Tabernacle; that person shall be cut off from Israel. Since the water of lustration was not dashed on him, he remains unclean; his uncleanness is still upon him.

¹⁴ This is the ritual: When a person dies in a tent, whoever enters the tent and whoever is in the tent shall be unclean seven days; ¹⁵ and every open vessel, with no lid fastened down, shall be unclean. ¹⁶ And in the open, anyone who touches a person who was killed or who died naturally, or human bone, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. ¹⁷ Some of the ashes from the fire of cleansing shall be taken for the unclean person, and fresh water shall be added to them in a vessel. ¹⁸ A person who is clean shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle on the tent and on all the vessels and people who were there, or on him who touched the bones or the person who was killed or died naturally or the grave. ¹⁹ The clean person shall sprinkle it upon the unclean person on the third day and on the seventh day, thus cleansing him by the seventh day. He shall then wash his clothes and bathe in water, and at nightfall he shall be clean. ²⁰ If anyone who has become unclean fails to cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the congregation, for he has defiled the Lord's sanctuary. The water of lustration was not dashed on him: he is unclean.

²¹ That shall be for them a law for all time. Further, he who sprinkled the water of lustration shall wash his clothes; and whoever touches the water of lustration shall be unclean until evening. ²² Whatever that unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches him shall be unclean until evening.

Chapter 20

¹ The Israelites arrived in a body at the wilderness of Zin on the first new moon, and the people stayed at Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there.

² The community was without water, and they joined against Moses and Aaron. ³ The people quarreled with Moses, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished at the instance of the Lord! ⁴ Why have you brought the Lord's congregation into this wilderness for us and our beasts to die there? ⁵ Why did you make us leave Egypt to bring us to this wretched place, a place with no grain or figs or vines or pomegranates? There is not even water to drink!" ⁶ Moses and Aaron came away from the congregation to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and fell on their faces. The Presence of the Lord appeared to them, ⁷ and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸ "You and your brother Aaron take the rod and assemble the community, and before their very eyes order the rock to yield its water. Thus you shall produce water for them from the rock and provide drink for the congregation and their beasts."

⁹ Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He had commanded him. ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron assembled the congregation in front of the rock; and he said to them, "Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?" ¹¹ And Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod. Out came copious water, and the community and their beasts drank.

¹² But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them." ¹³ Those are the Waters of Meribah—meaning that the Israelites quarrelled with the Lord—through which He affirmed His sanctity.

¹⁴ From Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardships that have befallen us; ¹⁵ that our ancestors went down to Egypt, that we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and that the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our ancestors. ¹⁶ We cried to the Lord and He heard our plea, and He sent a messenger who freed us from Egypt. Now we are in Kadesh, the town on the border of your territory. ¹⁷ Allow us, then, to cross your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, and we will not drink water from wells. We will follow the king's highway, turning off neither to the right nor to the left until we have crossed your territory."

¹⁸ But Edom answered him, "You shall not pass through us, else we will go out against you with the sword." ¹⁹ "We will keep to the beaten track," the Israelites said to them, "and if we or our cattle drink your water, we will pay for it. We ask only for passage on foot—it is but a small matter." ²⁰ But they replied, "You shall not pass through!" And Edom went out against them in heavy force, strongly armed. ²¹ So Edom would not let Israel cross their territory, and Israel turned away from them. ²² Setting out from Kadesh, the Israelites arrived in a body at Mount Hor. ²³ At Mount Hor, on

the boundary of the land of Edom, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ²⁴ "Let Aaron be gathered to his kin: he is not to enter the land that I have assigned to the Israelite people, because you disobeyed my command about the waters of Meribah. ²⁵ Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up on Mount Hor. ²⁶ Strip Aaron of his vestments and put them on his son Eleazar. There Aaron shall be gathered unto the dead."

²⁷ Moses did as the Lord had commanded. They ascended Mount Hor in the sight of the whole community. ²⁸ Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments and put them on his son Eleazar, and Aaron died there on the summit of the mountain. When Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, ²⁹ the whole community knew that Aaron had breathed his last. All the house of Israel bewailed Aaron thirty days.

Chapter 21

¹ When the Canaanite, king of Arad, who dwelt in the Negeb, learned that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he engaged Israel in battle and took some of them captive. ² Then Israel made a vow to the Lord and said, "If You deliver this people into our hand, we will proscribe their towns." ³ The Lord heeded Israel's plea and delivered up the Canaanites; and they and their cities were proscribed. So that place was named Hormah.

⁴ They set out from Mount Hor by way of the Sea of Reeds to skirt the land of Edom. But the people grew restive on the journey, ⁵ and the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why did you make us leave Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread and no water, and we have come to loathe this miserable food." ⁶ The Lord sent seraph serpents against the people. They bit the people and many of the Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Intercede with the Lord to take away the serpents from us!" And Moses interceded for the people. ⁸ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a seraph figure and mount it on a standard. And if anyone who is bitten looks at it, he shall recover." ⁹ Moses made a copper serpent and mounted it on a standard; and when anyone was bitten by a serpent, he would look at the copper serpent and recover.

¹⁰ The Israelites marched on and encamped at Oboth. ¹¹ They set out from Oboth and encamped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness bordering on Moab to the east. ¹² From there they set out and encamped at the wadi Zered. ¹³ From there they set out and encamped beyond the Arnon, that is, in the wilderness that extends from the territory of the Amorites. For the Arnon is the boundary of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. ¹⁴ Therefore the Book of the Wars of the Lord speaks of "... Waheb in Suphah, and the wadis: the Arnon ¹⁵ with its tributary wadis, stretched along the settled country of Ar, hugging the territory of Moab ..."

¹⁶ And from there to Beer, which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, "Assemble the people that I may give them water." ¹⁷ Then Israel sang this song:

Spring up, O well—sing to it—

¹⁸ The well which the chieftains dug,
Which the nobles of the people started
With maces, with their own staffs.

And from Midbar to Mattanah, ¹⁹ and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth, ²⁰ and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the country of Moab, at the peak of Pisgah, overlooking the wasteland.

²¹ Israel now sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, ²² "Let me pass through your country. We will not turn off into fields or vineyards, and we will not drink water from wells. We will follow the king's highway until we have crossed your territory." ²³ But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. Sihon gathered all his people and went out against Israel in the wilderness. He came to Jahaz and engaged Israel in battle. ²⁴ But Israel put them to the sword, and took possession of their land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as [Az] of the Ammonites, for Az marked the boundary of the Ammonites. ²⁵ Israel took all those towns. And Israel settled in all the towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon and all its dependencies.

²⁶ Now Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against a former king of Moab and taken all his land from him as far as the Arnon. ²⁷ Therefore the bards would recite:

"Come to Heshbon; firmly built
And well founded is Sihon's city.

²⁸ For fire went forth from Heshbon,
Flame from Sihon's city,
Consuming Ar of Moab,
The lords of Bamoth by the Arnon.

²⁹ Woe to you, O Moab!
You are undone, O people of Chemosh!
His sons are rendered fugitive
And his daughters captive
By an Amorite king, Sihon."

³⁰ Yet we have cast them down utterly,
Heshbon along with Dibon;
We have wrought desolation at Nophah,
Which is hard by Medeba.

³¹ So Israel occupied the land of the Amorites. ³² Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer, and they captured its dependencies and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

³³ They marched on and went up the road to Bashan, and King Og of Bashan, with all his people, came out to Edrei to engage them in battle. ³⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I give him and all his people and his land into your hand. You shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites who dwelt in Heshbon." ³⁵ They defeated him and his sons and all his people, until no remnant was left him; and they took possession of his country.

Chapter 22

¹ The Israelites then marched on and encamped in the steppes of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

