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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Chukat – Stealing the Credit From God

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Chukat (Khoo-kaht), which is Hebrew for “statute,” and it goes from Numbers 19:1 to Numbers 22:1.

This Torah portion gives instructions concerning the Red Heifer ritual; and it tells the story of Moses striking a rock; it also records the death of Aaron and Miriam; it gives us the account of Moses holding up the Bronze Serpent which saved the Israelites who were bitten by snakes when they looked at it; and it records the conquest of Arad, the Amorites, and Bashan.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk about stealing credit from God.

One of the greatest temptations of mankind is to exalt ourselves. We want people to think we’re the smartest, coolest, and most talented. We want to be seen and admired for our gifts and talents. It’s natural to desire acceptance and affirmation from others, but there’s a danger of idolatry when we make God’s work about us instead of Him.

When God told Moses and Aaron to speak to the rock in order to bring forth water for the people of Israel, Moses and Aaron should have simply done their part and reminded the Israelites that God was the source of the miracle. Instead, Moses said this:

Numbers 20:10b

“Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?”

Did you catch that? Moses led the Israelites to think that it was through *Moses and Aaron* that the water came. It was by this prideful act that Moses sinned by not upholding the Lord as holy in the eyes of the people:

Numbers 20:12

And the Lord (YHWH) said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”

Interestingly, God's Word is directly connected to the symbol of water (see Ephesians 5:26 for example). It is God's Word that washes us and nourishes us. Just as Moses and Aaron were merely the vessels through which God brought forth the water from the rock, leaders and teachers are the vessels through which God brings forth the water of His Word. They are not the source of the water themselves.

In the book of James we are told that not many people should be teachers (James 3:1). God takes leadership positions within the congregation very seriously. Why? Because "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). We all struggle with temptations, including—and perhaps especially—the temptation to make everything about us instead of God.

If a teacher gives great sermons, he might be tempted to say, "If it weren't for *my* amazing talent as the speaker, the people wouldn't have such a deep understanding! I'm the best!"

And when a person in leadership stumbles in this way by putting the focus on himself, he could potentially lead many others into idolatry. In fact, this is how cults are formed. The focus of the Church is all on a person—how great their teachings are, how they can perform miracles, etc.—rather than on God.

This is one of the reasons James says, "[We who teach will be judged with greater strictness](#)" (James 3:1). Leaders must always direct the people to God as the source of blessing, understanding, truth, and power.

This is not to say that we shouldn't acknowledge a person's talents or knowledge and celebrate those things as gifts from God. The point is this: if God has blessed you with a position of leadership or with knowledge or a talent to be used for His Kingdom, don't let it go to your head. Don't become prideful. You are merely a servant, a messenger.

If God has blessed you with teaching abilities and knowledge, remember that God is ultimately the source of the water. Remember that teachers are judged with greater strictness. Don't exalt yourself. Remain humble, point people to God, and God will be the one to lift you up and continue to use you to bless others for His glory. But if you get in the way, God might move you out of the way.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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