



CONGREGATION AGUDATH ACHIM  
FREEHOLD JEWISH CENTER

59 Broad Street · Freehold, New Jersey 07728  
office@freeholdjc.org · (732) 462-0254 · www.freeholdjc.org

## **Parshah Chukat** **June 19, 2021 – 9 Tamuz 5781**

The Children of Israel are nearing the end of their forty year sojourn in the wilderness and something odd happens. The people complain. Complaining, for these people, is not a strange occurrence. They complained on a fairly regular basis from the time they left Egypt. It was their “normal” way of self-expression.

What were the people complaining about now? They were complaining about the manna. They were complaining about a miraculous food that came from heavens, and was the taste and texture of whatever you wanted it to be. They complained essentially just for the sake of complaining.

G-d finally has had enough of their complaining and punishes them by sending poisonous snakes. They plead with Moses to pray for them and take away the snakes. Moses follows G-d’s direction and builds a snake replica from brass and hangs it on a high pole. Anyone bitten by a poisonous snake looks “heavenward” and is healed.

The question one must ask is; why poisonous snakes? It is all about perception. The people complained about manna, the one thing that sustained them for forty years. Their attitude changed and they kvetched.

The punishment was snakes, and the cure was another snake (of sorts). One was the source of suffering, and one was the source of healing.

G-d is teaching them to amend their perception and accentuate the positive and be thankful. This is true of that generation and ours.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

