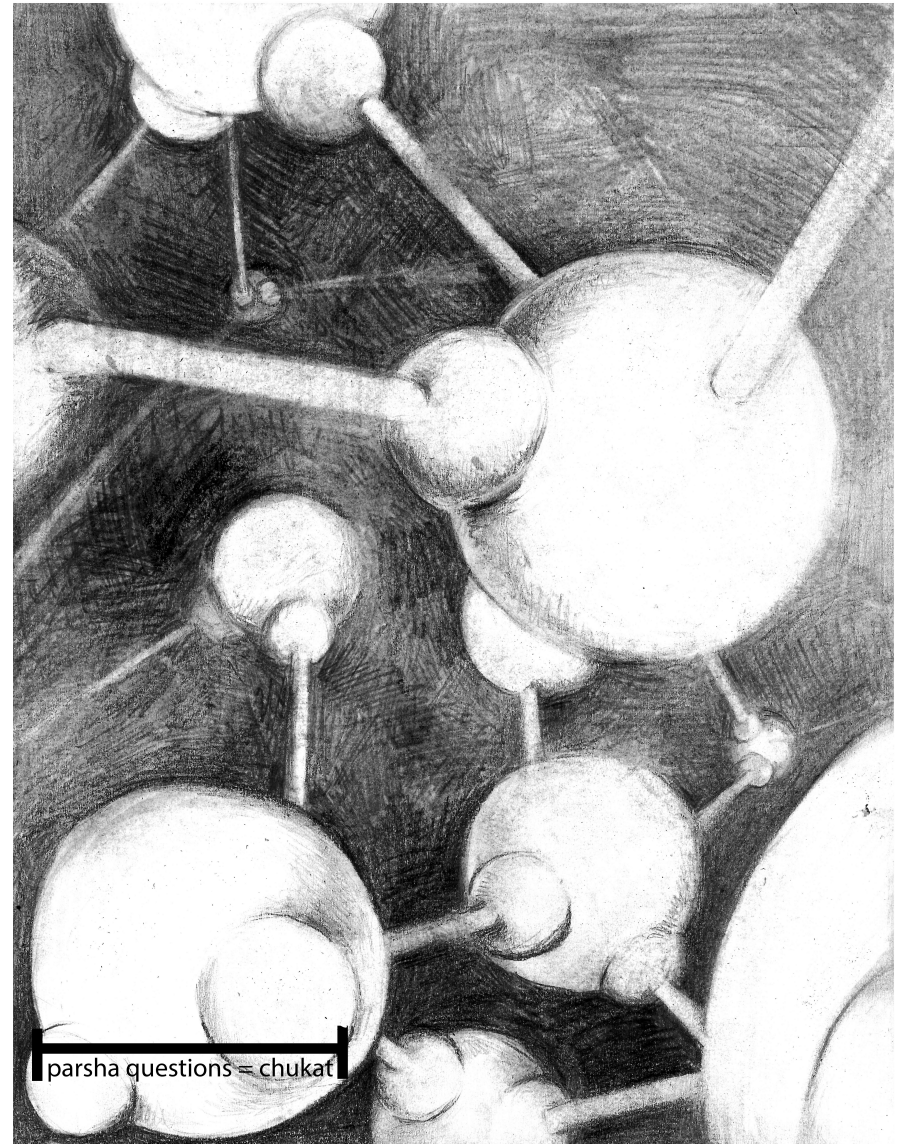


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Q1: There are no prescriptions for rites of mourning in the Torah, but there is a complex, protracted ritual for contact with a corpse. What can it and its details tell us about the way the people of the Torah encounter death?

Q2: How do the effects of death determined by contact (impurity) differ from those effects of death determined by kinship (mourning)? How much might they overlap?

Q3: Death impurity plays a central role in the purity system of the book of Numbers (see also 5:2, 6:9, and 9:6), but seems peripheral in Leviticus, whose purity system is centered around bodily fluids and food. Are there competing concepts of impurity in the Bible?

Q4: When might a person die in the open, and when in a tent? Is there any indication that one is normative?

Q5: How does this ritual differ from other purification rituals (see Lev. 12-15)? What is the required equipment? How many steps, over what period of time?

Q6: Why does hyssop appear in both parts of the ritual?

Q7: What do you imagine this group of unclean people doing outside the camp for seven days?

Q8: What resonance does this legislation around death have for a generation doomed to die in the desert? What does it mean to make and visit a grave when you are

wandering through empty land that you will never return to? Why does Eleazar perform this ritual instead of Aaron?

Q9: When does Miriam die? Is there any connection with the quarreling that follows?

Q10: What is unforgivable about Moses and Aaron's conduct at the waters of Meribah? Are there any other contributing reasons why they are denied entry to Canaan?

Q11: Was God sanctified by the waters of Meribah (v. 13), or not (v. 12)?

Q12: How does Israel's interaction with Edom relate to the old rivalry between Jacob and Esau? Why is there no reconciliation in this episode?

Q13: Why did God allow Israelites to be taken captive by Arad? How do they know what to do to appease God? Why does it work?

Q14: Why does Moses need to fashion a symbolic object to end the plague upon the people? Does this new form of death and healing shed light on the unique condition of this new generation?

Q15: There are no descriptions of battles here, just mentions of them. Why does the Torah lack interest in the particular violence and drama of the battlefield?