

ב"ה *Torah* Tidbits

ISSUE 1665

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ה' תמוז תשפ"ו - JUNE 20TH 2026

חוקת - CHUKAT

AVOT 5

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Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
Page 10



**Do Shared Hobbies Really
Matter in a Relationship?**
Aleeza Ben Shalom Page 88



ומדבר מתנה במדבר כ"א:י"ח

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT CHUKAT ZMANIM

CANDLES 7:11 PM • EARLY 6:18 PM • HAVDALA 8:30 PM • RABBEINU TAM 9:05 PM



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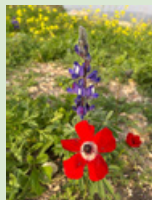
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COVER PHOTO Photographed by David Hochhauser

I made aliya in 2014 and live in Ramat beit Shemesh. This photo was taken at תל שוכה / גבעת התורמוסים. I love going each year to see the lupines in bloom right near Beit Shemesh overlooking עמק האלה where דוד fought גלית.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- 🌙 Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad: 4 Tammuz/ Thurs. night June 18
7 Days After Molad: 8 Tammuz/Mon. night June 22
Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Tammuz/Mon. night June 29

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
June 17 - 27 | 2 - 12 Tammuz

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:33-4:36
Sunrise	5:33-5:36
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:06-9:09
Magen Avraham	8:22-8:25
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	10:17-10:20
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:40-12:42
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:15-1:17
Plag Mincha	6:17-6:19
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:51-7:53



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	CHUKAT			BALAK		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	7:11	6:18	8:30	7:13	6:19	8:31
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	7:29	6:20	8:32	7:30	6:22	8:33
Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:28	6:17	8:29	7:31	6:20	8:32
Gush Etzion	7:27	6:18	8:30	7:28	6:20	8:31
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	7:29	6:21	8:33	7:30	6:22	8:34
Modiin/Chashmonaim	7:28	6:19	8:32	7:29	6:21	8:33
Netanya	7:30	6:21	8:34	7:31	6:22	8:35
Be'er Sheva	7:27	6:19	8:30	7:28	6:20	8:31
Rehovot	7:29	6:20	8:32	7:30	6:21	8:33
Petach Tikva	7:11	6:20	8:33	7:13	6:22	8:34
Ginot Shomron	7:28	6:20	8:32	7:29	6:21	8:33
Haifa / Zichron	7:20	6:22	8:35	7:22	6:23	8:36
Gush Shiloh	7:27	6:19	8:31	7:28	6:20	8:32
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	7:29	6:21	8:33	7:30	6:22	8:34
Givat Zeev	7:32	6:19	8:31	7:33	6:20	8:32
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	7:27	6:18	8:30	7:28	6:20	8:31
Ashkelon	7:29	6:21	8:33	7:30	6:22	8:34
Yad Binyamin	7:28	6:20	8:32	7:30	6:21	8:33
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	7:23	6:19	8:33	7:24	6:21	8:34
Golan	7:28	6:19	8:32	7:29	6:20	8:33
Nahariya/Maalot	7:20	6:21	8:35	7:21	6:23	8:36
Afula	7:29	6:20	8:33	7:30	6:21	8:34

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Chukat - 9:05 PM • Balak - 9:06 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Chulin 51



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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Twenty-eight years ago, my wife and I were blessed with our first child. He was born, Baruch Hashem, with all four grandparents and six great-grandparents still living. Sadly, though, he never had the chance to meet his two great-grandfathers on my wife's side. Still, we had the privilege of naming him Meir, after one of those grandfathers. Honestly, at the time, I had never really thought about how significant the name Meir is. It was only when I sat down to prepare the Torah thought for his brit milah that I came across the Talmud passage (Eruvin 13b) that teaches that the great Sage we know as Rabbi Meir was in fact named Rabbi Nehorai. He came to be called Rabbi Meir because he illuminated (meir) the eyes of the Sages in halacha. Both names share the same root of "light," Meir in Hebrew and Nehorai in Aramaic, and at its core, it is a name about giving light to others.

Years later, after my wife and I had spent five years running NCSY in Vancouver and had returned home to Givat Ze'ev, it was time for our dear Meir's bar mitzvah. The rabbi of the community at the time was Rav Lior Engelman, today a rabbi in Kfar Saba. He spoke beautifully about Meir, and then shared something I have never forgotten. He admitted that when he thinks about his own name, Lior, which means "I have light," he sometimes feels it points inward, toward himself. He told all those sitting in the synagogue that when he sees the name "Meir," he gets strangely jealous. "Meir," he said, "is entirely about shining onto others, about giving light to others." Those words have stayed with me ever since, especially as I have watched Meir grow, Baruch Hashem, into an incredible father who genuinely tries to shine his light onto others and to help people in so many ways.

That same idea returned to me a few years ago, when Rabbi Yosef Zeev Ginsberg and Rabbi Moshe Zev (Michael) Kahn told me they wanted to create a new program, an annual evening event called YAIR*. I wondered what it would add; we already have the Orthodox Union, we have OU Israel, and within that we have NCSY Israel, the Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center (the Zula), our teen centers, our Frontline support and our Women's Division. Why introduce yet another name? Why not simply call it another NCSY evening and stay focused?

They explained that the entire essence of the evening is to help our NCSYers think

In memory of

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Eliezer Schertz ז"ל**

**Beloved husband,
father, grandfather**

We miss you

**Reva Schertz,
Sara & Ronen Kory
and family**

seriously about the decisions that will shape the course of their lives. That is precisely why they wanted to call it YAIR, from that same root: to shine, to spread light, and to illuminate a path forward.

The program has now been running for several years, and this past Thursday night, just five days after our NCSY Israel Spring Shabbaton at Masada, we held another beautiful YAIR evening at the Nefesh B'Nefesh offices. It was deeply moving to see the panels assembled there for the sole purpose of inspiring teenagers to think about life's challenges, with speakers Beatie Deutsch, Debbie Hirsch, Rabbi Ephraim Rimel, Rabbi Leo Dee, Orit Mark-Ettinger, and Rabbi Uri Pilichowski. This was alongside a delicious dinner and uplifting music led by Rav Noam Koenigsberg, the beloved chazan and musician for our Yom Yerushalayim celebration at the Tayelet and a rabbi at Yeshivat Shaalvim.

The keynote that evening was delivered by Zvika Mor, the father of Eitan Mor. Eitan was abducted from the Nova music festival on October 7th and held captive in Gaza for 738 days, until his release this past Tishrei. Zvika had been scheduled to come together with Eitan; in the end Eitan was unable to join, but Zvika came and spoke. He described what it means to fight for your son without knowing whether he is alive or dead, to hold fast to what you believe is right through the most challenging chapter imaginable, and at the same time to keep a household of seven children, a wife and an extended family moving forward, and to be carried by their entire community of Kiryat Arba. It was so powerful to watch our teenagers listen and then ask real, searching questions of the panelists and of Zvika, questions that showed they were really there to understand and to grow.



All of this brought me back to the weight of a name. When you tell a child for

May the Torah learned from
this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of and לע"נ

Bernard Ansel ז"ל

דב בן יהושע ז"ל

on his 30th Yahrzeit - ד' תמוז

Dearly missed
and always in the thoughts
of his children, grandchildren
and great-grandchildren

twenty-eight, thirty, even a hundred and twenty years that he is Meir, that he is meant to enlighten, to shine onto others, or when you name a child after any great person, you are not only setting expectations. You are giving that child a place to dream and to grow. The goal is never to raise the bar so impossibly high that a child feels he or she has let you down, but rather to plant within him or her a deep and lasting desire to become something meaningful.

That very same feeling came to me again only two days earlier, when I took my son Mordechai Tzemach, who is named after Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt"l, to Rav Eliyahu's memorial service. It was already late at night, but it was important to me that our 13 year old Mordechai Tzemach be there alongside me, among the many thousands who came to pray and to share in some of The former Chief Rabbi, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Torah at Har HaMenuchot on the twenty-fifth of Sivan, his yahrzeit. Standing at his gravesite, I thought of what Rav Eliyahu, the *Rishon Letzion*, told me personally just two days before his final illness: that more than anything, what the Jewish people need is unity, that we must learn to love one another and to bring Klal Yisrael

together.

Sixteen years after his passing, I stood with my son at his tombstone and prayed that HaKadosh Baruch Hu grant us the strength to heed Rav Eliyahu's words and to overcome the painful divisions in our midst. We all know how to come together in times of war, and the war, sadly, is still ongoing. But surely we can also unite around the values we hold most precious. We may care deeply about some issues and less about others going on in the Jewish world today. Yet we must still be able to sit down together, around one table, and hold honest, respectful conversations, rather than allowing our disagreements to descend into negative speech and worse. That, in the end, is the true unity of Klal Yisrael.

May we be privileged to see in all of our youth—our children, our neighbors' children, our nieces and nephews—the very highest aspirations to which they have been named. That is what we all hope for: to watch the next generation grow, thrive, and walk in the ways of the Torah. And it is a message not only for a simcha, but for every single day, that we look at one another with that same hope and that same vision.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

* YAIR is sponsored in loving memory of Phil Konigsberg: יצחק פישל בן יעקב ז"ל

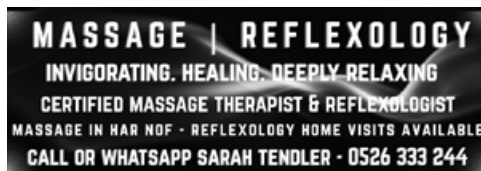


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Gloria Kestenbaum and family
on the passing of her husband**

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OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

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Located in the heart of Jerusalem, The Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center provides a warm, welcoming refuge for at-risk teens and young adults facing profound personal challenges. Many have become estranged from their families, schools, and communities, while struggling with homelessness, substance abuse, and crises of faith. Through the dedication of its counselors and educational professionals, the Zula offers these young people acceptance, guidance, and hope.

Serving more than 4,500 youth annually, the center helps these “diamonds in the rough” regain confidence, rebuild relationships, and chart a positive path forward. As summer approaches, Oren Asulin, Director of Programming, interviewed with Channel 14 and encouraged parents to maintain open lines of communication with their children and urged teens to seek out positive social circles, engage in meaningful activities, and make choices that support their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Thanks to our supporters, the Zula provides thousands of young people with a safe space, caring mentors, and a sense of belonging, empowering them to rediscover their strengths, realize their potential, and build brighter futures

Each week, we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking *olim* in their *klita* and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT CHUKAT



1ST ALIYA (BAMIDBAR 19:1-17)

Para Aduma: This is the Torah law. Elazar the Kohen shall remove from the camp an unblemished red heifer that has never worked. It is burned. Cedar, hyssop and red thread shall be burned with it. The Kohanim involved in the process are Tamei until evening. The ashes are used to purify those Tamei from contact with the dead. On the 3rd and 7th day a mix of these ashes and water are sprinkled on the Tamei person. Absent this process, one who has come in contact with the dead cannot become Tahor.

The law of the Red Heifer is a colorful one. A person who has been in contact with the dead has the most severe type of tuma, impurity. The Red Heifer removes the tuma.

The Red Heifer is taken out of the camp, burned, ashes mixed with water, sprinkled twice on the person who is tamei.

Two things shout out for attention. First, why are we discussing tuma here when we spent many parshiot in the book of Vayikra addressing tuma? Vayikra is the book of holiness; Bamidbar the book of national travel to the Land of Israel.

And second, unlike the purification processes of sacrifices in Vayikra, the Red Heifer breaks all the rules. It is taken out of the entire camp, not in the Temple. It is completely burned, down to ashes, not burnt on the altar. In a sacrifice the blood is sprinkled

on the altar; here, ashes in water sprinkled on the person.

It is a purification process of an entirely different sort.

I would like to offer that this tuma, contact with death, is placed here deliberately in the march to the Land.

I would like to offer a theory of tuma. This is speculative but I feel it is somewhat compelling. We discussed this in the book of Vayikra.

Tuma could be seen as bruised nobility. Man is created in the image of G-d. Noble, elevated, holy. Regal. In that capacity, he engages with his Creator. In addition, as a Jew, he is part of a grand covenant. Tuma bruises this nobility, this regality.

Tuma occurs as a result of our encounter with the part of the human being that is less noble, less elevated. Less regal. Those parts of our experience that we share with animals: our physical existence, our bodies. Food, procreation, illness and death.

When we walk through life, we have elevated moments. And we have encounters with our human frailty, our animal side, that bruise our dignity, our majesty, our feeling of being in the image of G-d. When we feel cast about as a driven leaf, subject to the vagaries of life, to the mortality of our being, no more than a glorified animal, majesty lost.

We argued in the book of Vayikra that encountering G-d in the Mikdash, in the Temple, requires man in his full majesty. When his sense of grandeur is bruised by tuma, by an impinging sense of physicality, he feels bruised majesty. That majesty must be

restored, he must become tahor. Only man in his full majesty can encounter his G-d in the Mikdash.

Here in the book of Bamidbar we are not engaging G-d in the Mikdash, we are marching as a people to our Land, to be a part of that great covenant of the Jewish people with G-d. This covenant of the Jewish people redeems us from the limited circumference of our life and lifts us into the grand march of human history. Our little life is part of a grand history, the history of the Jewish people. We are part of something far bigger than ourselves. The grand march of Jewish history.

It is here that the tuma of death is introduced. Mortality. Death is final. All that we aspire to in life is, well, left undone. Death confronts us with our end. There will be a day in which we will be no more.

That view of the mortality of life flies directly into the face of our covenant, our view of the march of history, that we are part of something larger.

The march to the Land of Israel in our book of Bamidbar requires a people who see a vision of the covenant, arching over their individual lives, into something far grander. We, little us, are part of a grand history. Death bruises that vision.

Tuma of our animal nature, like in Vayikra, bruises the nobility to stand before G-d. Tuma of encounter with death bruises our vision of our place in the immortal march of our covenant.

The purification here is not in the Temple. Temple purification is for the moment standing before G-d. This purification is for reaffirming our covenant, that our people is greater than just ourselves, that it will live on in a glorious covenant with G-d. We burn the Red Heifer, symbolic of our vibrant, but physical

life. *That* physical life has its end. Ash. But we mix it with “mayim chaim”. Life. As if to affirm that life will go on after death. Well, not that individual life. (I am not addressing the continued existence of the soul but rather life in this world). That life will not live on. But. Our people will.

The bruised, despondent view of our mortality is purified with an affirmation that in spite of our personal mortality, our national covenant lives on.

And hence, the tuma of death is placed deliberately here in the book of the march to the Land.



2ND ALIYA (19:18-20:6)

Hyssop is dipped in the purifying waters and sprinkled on the person or vessels requiring this purification. A tahor person sprinkles on the tamei person on the 3rd and 7th day; this tahor person then becomes tamei for the day. One who is tamei through contact with the dead and does not do this purification and then subsequently enters the Mishkan has committed a most grave sin. Miriam dies after the camp travels to Midbar Zin in the first month. There is no water. The people complain: oh that we had died like the others (over these 40 years). Why did you bring us from Egypt to die in this nasty place? Moshe and Aharon went to the Mishkan; G-d's glory appeared to them.

The death of leaders demoralizes in a different way. It is a very practical type of demoralization. Who will lead us? Will we ever have a leader like Miriam?

Our covenant gives us confidence that while we may never have a leader like Miriam, the covenant endures. We will live on, albeit differently, with new leaders.



3RD ALIYA (20:7-13)

G-d said to Moshe: gather the

people to the rock. Speak to the rock. Water sufficient for them and their flock will be produced. Moshe said: Listen oh rebellious ones. Will water emerge from a rock? Moshe hit the rock. Water emerged, enough for the flocks. G-d said to Moshe and Aharon: since you did not believe me, you will not enter the Land.

If the loss of Miriam is demoralizing, the impending loss of Aharon and Moshe compounds that. But the march to the Land will continue.

The death of Moshe and Aharon can be seen as a powerful statement of the greatness, the capability, the trust of G-d in His people. The Jewish people are greater than any leader or other; even Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. You, Moshe and Aharon, *you* will not enter the Land; but the *people* will. Had Moshe led the people into the Land, we would forever wonder if our fate is due to Moshe's greatness. And without him, who are we?

The death of both Moshe and Aharon before realizing the dream of entering the Land is jarring. And crucial. The Torah will end with the greatest leaders falling short of realizing the dream of entering the Land. But far from being a dystopia, and while not being a utopia, it is an affirmation that the Jewish people as a people rise above the presence or absence of individual leaders. As great as some leaders are, the Jewish people are the story here. And they will enter the Land. The Jewish people will always *have* great people; but the Jewish people *is* a great people.



4TH ALIYA (20:14-21)

Moshe sends messengers to the King of Edom. You are aware of your brother Israel's history: we left Egypt with G-d's help. We need to cross your land, at no cost to you, to enter our Land. The King said no. The people answered: we will stay

on the road and pay for water. Edom said no and came with a large contingent. The Jewish people circled back.

The journey to the land hits a roadblock. We need to pass through the land of Edom. The King says no.

This story parallels the crossing of the sea. Like here, we journeyed. Hit a roadblock, the sea. And couldn't turn back because the King, Paro, blocked our way.

But the outcomes are opposite. The sea split. Here, we reroute around Edom.

At the sea, Divine intervention. The sea split miraculously. Here, the confrontation with Edom. Nothing. We circle around Edom.

This story is part of the transition from the life of miracles. To the life of normal human impediments. There will be roadblocks. And no miracles. This is the transition from Divine control to human leadership.



5TH ALIYA (20:22-21:9)

At Har Hor Aharon is told he will die. Up the mountain, Moshe clothes Elazar in the garments of Aharon. Aharon dies. The entire people mourn for 30 days. The King of Arad in the Negev hears and does battle with the people. The people prevail. The people travel to circumvent Edom. The long journey aggravates the people. They complain. Snakes attack. The people regret their sins. G-d tells Moshe to make a copper snake. When the people gaze on it, they recover.

The death of Aharon and the clothing of Elazar continues the transition of leadership. Moshe, Aaron and Miriam led. Now it is going to be Elazar. The transition occurs before Aharon's death. Transitions are inevitable and need to be planned.



6TH ALIYA (21:10-20)

The travel takes the people to the

east of Moav. They travel north to the area of the Emori. The travels are recorded in the books of wars, traveling on to the well. They sang of their fortune and their travels.

The circuitous route of the march is perplexing. From the Sinai desert to Israel is, well, yashar, yashar. Straight up north. The direct route into the land of Israel is from the Negev. Travel north past Beerhseva to Chevron. Then keep going. Straight. Yet, they travel east to the nations on the east bank of the Jordan. Their path is then north up through Jordan, ending up opposite Jericho. And from there, once they enter the Land, they will go to Shechem.

Why this wide, wide swing to the east, up north through Jordan? Why not enter from the Negev straight north? The Torah does not tell us. But we can speculate.

At this point in Jewish history, the Jewish people have entered the land 3 times: Avraham. That went well. Yaakov when he returned from Lavan. That went well. And the spies. That didn't go well.

And now we are entering again. Whose footsteps would you like to follow? Avraham and Yaakov both entered from the north and went immediately to Shechem. The spies came up from the south to Hevron.

The people avoid the path of the spies. And adopt the path of Avraham. Hence travel up north on the east side of the Jordan, so you can enter the Land and head straight to Shechem. Just like Avraham. And Yaakov.



7TH ALIYA (21:21-22:1)

Messengers are sent to Sichon for permission to cross his land. Sichon confronts them for war. Sichon is roundly defeated. The people settle in the land of the Emori. They travel to the land of Og, the king of the Bashan. G-d tells them

they will succeed against Og, as they did with Sichon. They defeat Og, arriving at the plains of Moav, opposite Jericho.

In this march up the east side of the Jordan, the Divine has been conspicuously absent. Israel sent messengers to Sichon. No Divine command. Moshe staked out the cities along the route into the Land.

The march into the Land has begun. And while the march of the people until this time has been with the Mishkan in their midst, the manna falling from heaven, slowly the transfer of leadership into the hands of man is occurring. While He lurks, ever present, it is man leading the march.

HAFTORAH SHOFTIM 11:1-33

The haftorah opens with an attack on the Israelites from the people of Ammon. The Israelites call upon Yiftach to lead them into battle. He sends a message to Ammon which includes a reference to the conquest of the lands of Sichon and Og, which apparently is the tie in with our Torah reading.

Yiftach made a condition with the Jewish people regarding his willingness to take on this role as commander: "If you bring me back to fight with the children of Ammon, and God delivers them before me, I will become your head." The Jewish people accepted his terms.

Yiftach after trying to make peace with Ammon has no choice but to go to war. He successfully leads his people in battle and they eliminate the Ammonite threat. ■

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STATS

39th of 54 sedras; 6th of 10 in Bamidbar.
Written on 159.2 lines; rank: 39.
10 Parshiyot; 6 open, 4 closed.
87 pesukim; rank: 43.
1245 words; rank: 40.
4670 letters; rank 41.
Smallest sedra in Bamidbar in lines,
pesukim, words, letters.
Fewer pesukim than Shmini, more
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BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

שמעו נא המרים המן הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים (כ"י)

“And he said to them: Hear now you rebels, are we to bring you forth water out of this rock? (20:10) What does the phrase “Hamorim” really mean? What was Moshe’s accusation of these people who challenged him?

Rashi explains firstly that he was accusing them of “being those who refuse”. However, in a deeper explanation, the word “Hamorim” is a derivation from the Greek word “foolish people”, referring to those who want to become the “teachers” to their teachers.

Why would Moshe use a derivation of a Greek phrasing instead of a Hebrew expression?

Rabbi Yisrael Eliyahu Trunik (Kutno, Poland; 1820-1893) explains that there is a difference between the Torah perspective as opposed to the Greek perspective. In Torah’s point of view, every generation is one step further away from the Sinai experience, representing a decline in spirituality and less connection to our origin. As pointed on in Talmud Shabbat 112b, if in past generations man was referred to as humans, then subsequent generations should be referred to as donkeys. However, in accordance with Greek philosophy, as natural science progresses, future generations are superior to those of previous generations. Later students can be seen excelling above the achievements of their teachers. The Torah philosophy is just the opposite. Moshe made this known to these rabble rousers that they were actively adopting the non-Jewish principles of trying to outperform their leaders. This is why Moshe uses the Greek terminology to accuse their behavior of refuting the Torah perspective and adopting a foreign one.

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

“The Many Songs of Leadership”

Everyone has his or her own voice. Some express it loudly and clearly; some just mumble or whisper. There are those who let their voices be heard only in their professional lives and are silent and withdrawn at home. Others use their voices only within their families and stifle their voices in the outside world.

Our voices can be expressed in a variety of ways: through speech, through the written word, and even by means of our postures and gestures. Our voices can also be expressed through song.

In a book he wrote for managers of organizations coping with the complex challenges of the 21st century work environment, Stephen Covey makes the following statement: “There is a deep, innate, almost inexpressible

yearning within each one of us to find our voice in life.” That statement is the basis for his book, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, which is designed to help organizational leaders find their voices and inspire others to find theirs.

Each of the great leaders of the Jewish people, from biblical times down to the present, had his or her own distinctive voice. The voice of Abraham was heard throughout his world; the voice of Isaac was almost silent in comparison. Moses described his own voice as defective, yet he was capable of supreme eloquence. Joshua’s voice is never described as wanting in any way, yet we have few examples of his personal unique voice.

Some of our great leaders, including Moses, expressed their voices in song. We have the Song of the Sea in which the voice of Moses dominates; his sister Miriam responds to Moses’ song in her own voice; the Prophetess Deborah and King David are exemplary in their ability to use the medium of song to express their unique and distinctive voices.

All of the above are examples of how individual Jewish heroes and heroines found and expressed their voices. This week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Chukat*, provides an example of an entirely different kind of a voice: not the voice of one person, but the voice of an entire group, indeed of an entire nation. It is the Song of the Well, of the *Be’er*:

“...the well where the Lord said to Moses, ‘Assemble the people that I may give them water.’ Then Israel sang this song:

Spring up, O well – sing to it –

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פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה

Rabbi Moshe & Chana Poupko
and Family

The well which the chieftains dug,
Which the nobles of the people started
With the sceptre, and with their own staffs.
And from the wilderness to Mattanah,
and from Mattanah to Nahaliel,
and from Nahaliel to Bamoth..." (*Numbers*
21:16-19)

This is a much briefer song than the song that Moses led when the people of Israel miraculously crossed the Sea. But part of this passage too, at least in the synagogues with which I am familiar, is chanted melodically.

I have long been impressed by the fact that this week's Torah portion, in which the Song of the Well appears, describes a critical transition in the leadership of the Jewish people. From the time of the Exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people essentially have had three leaders: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. In this week's *parsha*, Miriam dies and is buried; Aaron too is "gathered unto his people" and is mourned; and Moses learns that his leadership role will come to an end sooner than he had thought, before the Jewish people enter the Promised Land.

This is indeed a story of transition, of the end of an era, of the passing of the mantle of leadership to a new generation.

No wonder then that the song sung in this week's *parsha* is so very different from the song sung by Moses at that triumphant moment near the beginning of his leadership career.

Our Sages tell us in the Talmudic tractate of *Sotah* that the Song of the Sea was sung by the people responsively. That is, Moses said the first phrase, which the people said after him. He proceeded then to the second phrase, and the people echoed him. Moses was an authoritative leader, and the people were obedient followers. Moses was the

active composer of the song, the choirmaster as it were, and the people were but the choir.

In this week's Torah portion, two of the leaders pass from the scene, and Moses learns that his leadership authority is waning. The Song of the Well is an entirely different leadership song from the Song of the Sea. In this week's song, the entire people sing as one. It begins not "Then Moses sang this song," but rather "Then Israel sang this song." The leadership passes from one Divinely chosen charismatic leader to the people as a whole.

The people find their voice, and it is the voice of song. How beautifully this is expressed in the Midrash *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Chukat* Note 764):

...after 40 years, the people finally matured and began to sing a song on their own accord, saying, "Master of the Universe, it is now incumbent upon You to do miracles for us and for us to sing, as it is written: 'It has pleased the Lord to deliver us and that is why we sing our song all the days of our lives...'" (*Isaiah* 38:20)

Jewish history has known epochs in which there were clear leaders, gifted and often charismatic individuals who, by virtue of their wisdom or heroism, seemed ordained by the Almighty Himself to lead our people. But we have also known times, such as the present, when such prominent leaders are not apparent.

It is at times such as these that we all must assume leadership responsibilities. It is at times such as these that we cannot afford to humbly refrain from acting as leaders in our own families and communities. It is at times such as these that we must, each of us, find our own voices and sing the songs of leadership. ■

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לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Why Was Moses Not Destined to Enter the Land?

It is one of the most perplexing, even disturbing, passages in the Torah. Moses the faithful shepherd, who has led the Israelites for forty years, is told that he will not live to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land.

No one has cast a longer shadow over the history of the Jewish people than Moses - the man who confronted Pharaoh, announced the plagues, brought the people out of Egypt, led them through the sea and desert and suffered their serial ingratitude; who brought the Word of God to the people, and prayed for the people to God. The name Israel means "one who wrestles with God and with men and prevails." That, supremely, was Moses, the man whose passion for justice and hyper-receptivity to the voice of God made him the greatest leader of all time. Yet he was not destined to enter the land to which he had spent his entire time as a leader travelling toward. Why?

The biblical text at this point is both lucidly clear and deeply obscure. The facts are not in doubt. Almost forty years have passed

since the Exodus. Most of the generation who remembered Egypt have died. So too had Miriam, Moses' sister. The people have arrived at Kadesh in the Zin desert, and they are now close to their destination. In their new encampment, however, they find themselves without water. They complain. "*Why have you brought the Lord's assembly into this wilderness only for us and our livestock to die here? Why did you take us up out of Egypt to bring us to this dreadful place with no grain, no figs, no vines or pomegranates – there is no water to drink!*" (Num. 20:4-5) The tone of voice, the petulance, is all too familiar. The Israelites have hardly deviated from it throughout. Yet suddenly we experience not *deja-vu* but tragedy:

Moshe and Aharon went away from the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

They fell on their faces, and the Lord's glory was revealed to them. And the Lord spoke to Moshe: "*Take the staff, you and your brother Aharon, and assemble the community. Speak to the rock before their eyes and it will give forth*

water. You shall bring forth water for them from the rock, giving the community and their animals to drink.” Moshe took the staff from before the Lord, as He had commanded him. And Moshe and Aharon gathered the assembly together before the rock. He said to them, “Listen now, rebels! Shall we produce water for you from this rock?” Then Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their animals drank. But the Lord said to Moshe and Aharon, “Because you did not put your trust in Me to demonstrate My holiness in the Israelites’ eyes, you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I am giving them.” (Num. 20:6-12)

Where had Moses gone wrong? What was his sin? What offence could warrant so great a punishment as not to be privileged to see the conclusion of the mission he had been set by God?

Few passages have generated so much controversy among the commentators. Each offers his own interpretation and challenges the others. So many were the hypotheses that the nineteenth century Italian exegete R. Shmuel David Luzzatto was moved to say, “Moses committed one sin, yet the commentators have accused him of thirteen or more - each inventing some new iniquity!” One modern scholar (R. Aaron Rother, Shaarei Aharon) lists no less than twenty-five lines of approach, and there are many more.

The following are the most significant: Rashi, offering the simplest and best-known explanation, says that Moses’ sin lay in striking the rock rather than speaking to it. Had Moses done as he was commanded, the people would have learned an unforgettable lesson: “If a rock, which neither speaks nor hears nor is in need of sustenance, obeys the word



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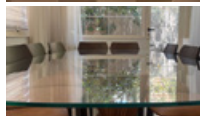
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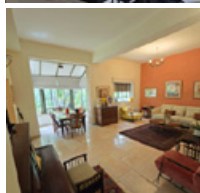
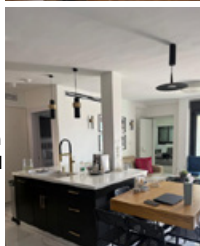
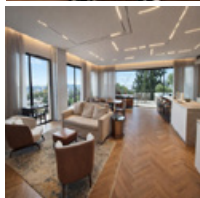
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of God, how much more so should we.”

Rambam (Moses Maimonides) says that Moses’ sin lay in his anger - his intemperate words to the people, “*Listen now, rebels.*” To be sure, in anyone else, this would have been considered a minor offence. However, the greater the person, the more exacting are the standards God sets. Moses was not only a leader but the supreme role-model of the Israelites. Seeing his behaviour, the people may have concluded that anger is permissible - or even that God was angry with them, which He was not.

Ramban (Nachmanides), following a suggestion of Rabbeinu Chananel, says that the sin lay in saying, “*Shall we produce water for you from this rock?*” - implying that what was at issue was human ability rather than Divine miracle and grace.

R. Joseph Albo and others (including Ibn Ezra) suggest that the sin lay in the fact that Moses and Aaron fled from the congregation and fell on their faces, rather than standing their ground, confident that God would answer their prayers.

Abarbanel makes the ingenious suggestion that Moses and Aaron were not punished for what they did at this point. Rather, their offences lay in the distant past. Aaron sinned by making the Golden Calf. Moses sinned in sending the spies. Those were the reasons

they were not privileged to enter the land. To defend their honour, however, their sins are not made explicit in the biblical text. Their actions at the rock were the proximate rather than underlying cause (a hurricane may be the proximate cause of a bridge collapsing; the underlying cause, however, was a structural weakness in the bridge itself).

More recently, the late Rav Shach zt”l suggested that Moses may have been justified in rebuking the people, but he erred in the sequence of events. First he should have given them water, showing both the power and providence of God. Only then, once they had drunk, should he have admonished them.

Difficulties, however, remain. The first is that Moses himself attributed God’s refusal to let him enter the land to His anger with the people, not just with himself: “*At that time, I pleaded with the Lord: ‘O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand; what force in heaven or earth can do deeds and mighty acts like Yours! Please let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon.’ But the Lord was enraged with me because of you, and would not listen to me.* (Deut. 3:23)

Similarly, Psalm 106:32 states, “By the waters of Merivah they angered the Lord and trouble came to Moses because of them.”

Second: however we identify Moses’ sin, there is still a disproportion between it and its punishment. Because of Moses’ prayers, God forgave the Israelites. Could He not forgive Moses? To deprive him of seeing the culmination of a lifetime’s efforts was surely unduly harsh. According to the Talmud, when the angels witnessed Rabbi Akiva’s death, they said, “Is this the Torah, and this its reward?” They might have asked the same question

ב"ה

Dr. Moshe Gottlieb ז"ל
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will be held at his Kever
on Har Menuchot,
Har Tamir, on
Tuesday, June 23rd (8 Tammuz)
at 10 am

about Moses.

Third is the tantalising fact that, on a previous occasion in similar circumstances, God had specifically told Moses to take his staff and strike the rock: precisely the act for which (for Rashi and many others) he was now punished:

But the people were thirsty for water. They railed against Moshe, *“Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Was it to kill me, my children, and all my livestock by thirst?”* *“What shall I do with this people?”* Moshe cried to the Lord. *“Another moment and they will stone me.”* The Lord answered Moshe, *“Walk out to face the people taking some of the elders of Israel with you. Take the staff with which you struck the Nile in your hand, and go. I will be there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock; water will come out of it and the people will drink.”* (Ex. 17:3-6)

It is with the deepest trepidation that one hazards a new explanation of so debated a text, but there may be a way of seeing the entire episode that ties the others together and makes sense of what otherwise seems like an impenetrable mystery.

The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 5a) contains the following statement of Resh Lakish:

What is the meaning of the verse, ‘This is the book of the generations of Adam’? Did Adam have a book? Rather, it teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam (in advance), each generation and its interpreters, each generation and its Sages, each generation and its leaders.

One of the most striking features of Judaism is that it is not centred on a single figure - a founder - who dominates its entire history. To the contrary, each age gave rise to its own leaders, and they were different from one another, not only in personality but in the

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type of leadership they exercised. First came the age of the patriarchs and matriarchs. Then came Moses and his disciple Joshua. They were followed by a succession of figures known generically as ‘Judges’, though their role was more military than judicial. With Saul, monarchy was born - though even then, kings were not the only leaders; there were prophets and priests as well. With Ezra a new figure emerges: the ‘Scribe’, the teacher as hero. Then came elders, Sages, masters of halachah and aggadah. During the Mishnaic period the leader of the Jewish people was known as Nasi (and later, in Babylon, as Resh Galutah or Exilarch). Chatam Sofer in one of his Responsa (Orach Chayyim, 12) notes that though the Nasi was a scholar, his role was as much political as educational and spiritual. He was, in fact, a surrogate king. The Middle Ages saw the emergence of yet more new types: commentators, codifiers, philosophers and poets, alongside a richly varied range of leadership structures, some lay, some rabbinic, others a combination of both.

Leadership is a function of time. There is a famous dispute about Noah, whom the Torah describes as ‘perfect in his generations’. According to one view, had Noah lived in a more righteous age, he would have been greater still. According to another, he would

have been merely one of many. The fact is that each generation yields the leadership appropriate to it. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 21b) says that Ezra was worthy of bringing the Torah to Israel, had Moses not preceded him. In another passage (Menachot 29b) it says that Moses himself asked God to give the Torah through Rabbi Akiva rather than himself. One can speculate endlessly about the might-have-beens of history, but we are each cast into the world at a time not of our choosing, and we have no choice but to live within its particular challenges and constraints. For that reason, we do not compare leaders, for there are no timeless standards by which to judge them. “Jerubaal in his generation was like Moses in his generation; Bedan in his generation was like Aaron in his generation; Jephthah in his generation was like Samuel in his generation.”

Each age produces its leaders, and each leader is a function of an age. There may be - indeed there are - certain timeless truths about leadership. A leader must have courage and integrity. He must be able, say the Sages, to relate to each individual according to his or her distinctive needs. Above all, a leader must constantly learn (a king must study the Torah “all the days of his life”). But these are necessary, not sufficient, conditions. A leader must be sensitive to the call of the hour - this hour, this generation, this chapter in the long story of a people. And because he or she is of a specific generation, even the greatest leader cannot meet the challenges of a different generation. That is not a failing. It is the existential condition of humanity.

The remarkable fact about Moses and the rock is the way he observes precedent. Almost forty years earlier, in similar circumstances, God had told him to take his staff and strike the rock. Now too, God told him to take his

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staff. Evidently Moses inferred that he was being told to act this time as he had before, which is what he does. He strikes the rock. What he failed to understand was that time had changed in one essential detail. He was facing a new generation. The people he confronted the first time were those who had spent much of their lives as slaves in Egypt. Those he now faced were born in freedom in the wilderness.

There is one critical difference between slaves and free human beings. Slaves respond to orders. Free people do not. They must be educated, informed, instructed, taught - for if not, they will not learn to take responsibility. Slaves understand that a stick is used for striking. That is how slave-masters compel obedience. Indeed, that was Moses' first encounter with his people, when he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. But free human beings must not be struck. They respond not to power but persuasion. They need to be spoken to. What Moses failed to hear - indeed to understand - was that the difference between God's command then and now ("strike the rock" and "speak to the rock") was of the essence. The symbolism in each case was precisely calibrated to the mentalities of two different generations. You strike a slave, but *speak* to a free person.

Moses' inability to hear this distinction was not a failing, still less was it a sin. It was an inescapable consequence of the fact that he was mortal. A figure capable of leading slaves to freedom is not the same as one able to lead free human beings from a nomadic existence in the wilderness to the conquest and settlement of a land. These are different challenges, and they need different types of leadership. Indeed the whole biblical story of how a short journey took forty years teaches us just this truth.

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Great change does not take place overnight. It takes more than one generation - and therefore more than one type of leader. Moses could not become a Joshua, just as Joshua could not be another Moses. The fact that at a moment of crisis Moses reverted to an act that had been appropriate forty years before showed that time had come for the leadership to be handed on to a new generation. It is a sign of his greatness that Moses, too, recognised this fact and took the initiative in asking God (in Bamidbar ch. 27) to appoint a successor.

If this interpretation is correct, then Moses did not sin, nor was he punished. To be sure, the Torah uses language expressive of sin ("You did not believe in Me", "You rebelled against Me", "You trespassed against Me", "You did not sanctify Me"). But these phrases may refer, as several commentators suggest (see the tenth interpretation cited by

Abarbanel, and the commentary of Luzzatto) not to Moses and Aaron but to the people, and the incident as a whole. That would explain why Moses said that “God was angry with me because of you”.

The fact that Moses was not destined to enter the Promised Land was not a punishment but the very condition of his (and our) mortality. It is also clear why this episode occurs in the sedra of Chukat, which begins with the rite of the Red Heifer and purification from contact with death. We also understand why it follows on the death of Miriam, Moses and Aaron’s sister. Law and narrative are here intricately interwoven in a set of variations on the inevitability of death and the continuity of life. For each of us, there is a Jordan we will not cross, however long we live, however far we travel. “It is not for you to complete the task,” said Rabbi Tarfon, “but neither are you free to disengage from it.” But this is not inherently tragic. What we begin, others will complete - if we have taught them how.

Moses was a great leader, the greatest of all time. But he was also the supreme teacher. The difference is that his leadership lasted for forty years, while his teachings have endured for more than three thousand years (that, incidentally, is why we call him *Moshe Rabbeinu*, “Moses our teacher”, not “Moses our leader”). This is not to devalue leadership: to the contrary. Had Moses only taught, not led, the Israelites would not have left Egypt. The message of the rock is not that leadership does not matter: it is that leadership must be of its time. A teacher may live in the world of ancient texts and distant hopes, but a leader must hear the music of the age and address the needs and possibilities of now.

The great leaders are those who, knowledgeable of a people’s past and dedicated to

its ideal future, are able to bring their contemporaries with them on the long journey from exile to redemption, neither longing for an age that was, nor rushing precipitously into an age that cannot yet be. And, as Moses understood more deeply than any other human being, the great leaders are also teachers, empowering those who come after them to continue what they have begun. ■

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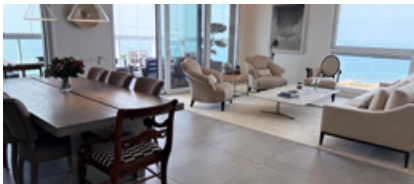
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Moving Forward – When Moving Together

The tradition of reading the haftarah on Shabbat and Yom Tov was instituted during the Tanaitic period, as found in the Mishnah [Megillah 4:5], which indicates that the practice was well-established by then. Its institution was, according to many, the result of decrees of foreign rulers who forbade public Torah readings. In response to these “diktats”, Chazal then introduced the readings from Sifrei Nevi'im that would correspond to the weekly Torah portions, to be read in place of the banned public Torah readings.

Our Rabbi's institution of the haftarah reading should keep us mindful of the past realities and history and its impact on our world. Reflecting upon the events of ancient Israel is especially important in understanding the weekly haftarot! This helps uncover the prophetic messages shared to that generation

and its importance for us today. It is also why I often touch upon the preceding-or subsequent- events to better understand what the haftarah teaches us.

The connection between the parasha and haftarah is quite obvious, as the reading from the Sefer Shofetim [perek 11] parallels and, indeed, even uses the exact wording found in the Parashat Chukat. The parasha relates how Israel avoided invading the nation of Ammon when conquering the land from Arnon to Yabok and the haftarah tells of the argument of against the Ammonite enemy who demanded the return of the very same land, “from Arnon to Yabok” – although it was never taken from Ammon.

The haftarah certainly recounts an interesting clash (and eventual battle) between these two opponents. But it is far more than an “exciting” conflict.

It reveals a sad and difficult era that reflects the struggles of a failed generation.

Consider:

Gil'ad is threatened by Ammon...**but has no army to fight them!!**

No neighboring tribes offered to help them!

They reluctantly choose Yiftach – **whom they had driven out from Gil'ad!!**

Yes, Yiftach was successful in repelling the

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enemy – was this a victory?

Consider the sad “epilogue” to this entire episode:

After Yiftach’s glorious victory, **the tribe of Ephrayim mustered an army and marched northward to confront the new leader.**

Upon reaching Yiftach **they threatened to burn down his house** for never having summoned them to join him in the battle.

The disagreement led **to a civil war between Yiftach’s army and the army of Ephrayim.**

That war that **led to the deaths of 42,000 men of the tribe of Ephrayim.**

This horrific closing to the era of Yiftach (he ruled for only 6 years) grants us a peek into the condition of the nation at that time. Israel was divided! Unable to muster an army, they manage to gather-only- a group of malcontents (“anashim reikim”). Even when victorious, the tribes did not contribute to the victory but thought only of themselves - **not** the nation as a whole. When granted respite from their enemies, when Israel was miraculously spared a predictable massacre, they still could find no common ground upon which to build a united nation.

History teaches us over and over again that the divisions within our people weaken us and, all too often, lead to heartbreak and misfortune. And, yes, once again, our haftarah **DOES**, indeed, leave a message for us today.

The most dangerous menace that our nation confronts is when we forget that we are **one** nation and, despite our differences, we can-and should- move forward.

But we can move **forward** only when we move **together**. ■

Rabbi Winkler’s popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

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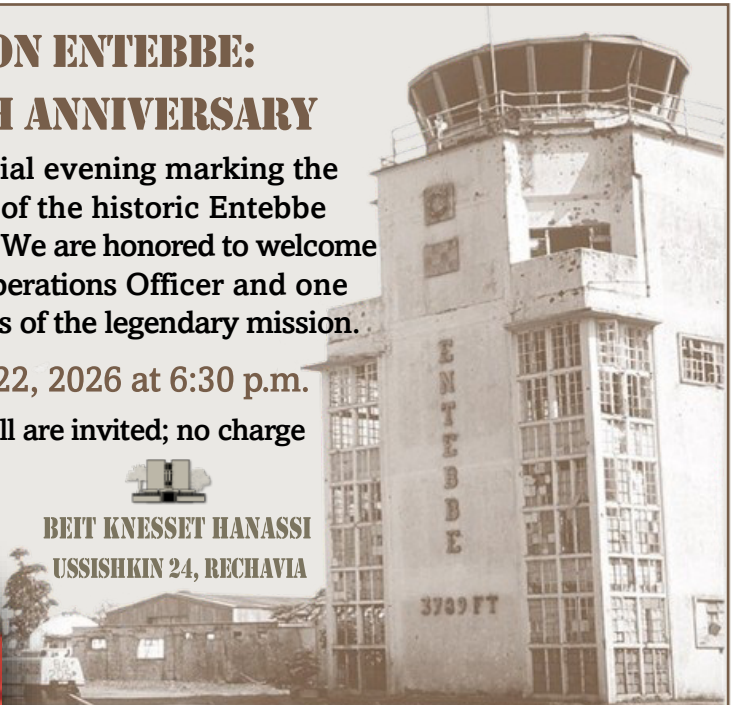
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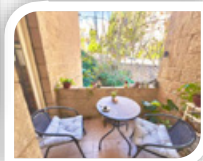
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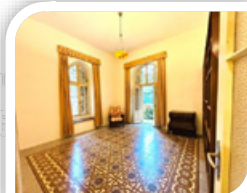
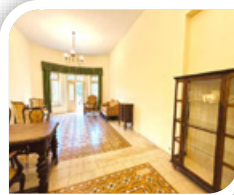
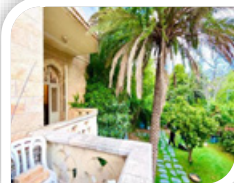
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Living Beyond Achievement

The Gemara (Kedushin 31a) relates the well-known story of Dama ben Netina. The *Chachamim* sought to purchase from him a precious stone for the *Choshen* (known as the *yashfeh*), corresponding to the tribe of Binyamin. The key to access the stone, however, lay beneath his father's pillow. Despite the enormous sum offered (sixty ribo), Dama refused to wake his father.

The following year, Hashem rewarded him: a Parah Adumah was born in his herd. When the *Chachamim* came to purchase it, Dama acknowledged that he could demand any price. Yet he requested only the exact sum he had forfeited in honoring his father.

This Gemara is often cited as a striking example of the greatness of a non-Jew who fulfilled *kibbud av va'em* at the highest level. And indeed, it is. But as Rav Yaakov Neiman in Darkei Mussar teaches, there is another

dimension that reveals not only the greatness of Dama ben Netina, but the unique greatness of a Jew.

A SUBTLE BUT PROFOUND DIFFERENCE

At first glance, the story is inspirational. But upon deeper reflection, it highlights an even greater characteristic of Am Yisrael. It is written: **אם יתן איש את כל הון ביתו באהבה בוז יבוז לו** - if a person were to offer all the wealth in his home for love, it would be scorned. (Shir Hashirim 8:7)

A Jew does not "sell" a mitzvah. A mitzvah is not a transaction, not something to be exchanged for profit. It is an expression of a relationship with Hashem. Even if, in rare cases, one may speak of "selling" reward, the mitzvah itself is never for sale.

Dama ben Netina, for all his greatness, ultimately relates to the mitzvah in transactional terms. When the opportunity arises, he effectively says: *I forfeited money for that mitzvah - now I will recover it.* The act is noble, but the framework is still one of exchange.

A Jew, by contrast, lives in a different reality. A mitzvah is not something one trades, rather it is something one lives.

FORGETTING GREATNESS

There is a second, equally profound distinction.

The Gemara states: "לשנה אחרת" - in a later year. Not necessarily the following year, but some time afterward. Yet when the *Chachamim* arrive, Dama immediately recalls his earlier act. It remains vivid, present, and central in his mind. A person of true spiritual stature, relates differently to his own

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accomplishments. When a Jew performs a mitzvah, he strives to forget it.

Not out of ingratitude, but out of humility. Not because it lacks value, but because dwelling on it breeds complacency and arrogance. The focus must always shift forward: *What more can I do? Where do I still need to grow?*

The great figures of Klal Yisrael lived with this mindset. They did not define themselves by what they had already achieved. Their gaze was always fixed on what remained unfinished. Even Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest of all prophets, declares: **“אתה החילול”** *“להראות את עבדך”* - *You have only begun to show Your servant.* (Devarim 3:24). If Moshe saw everything as merely a beginning, how much more so must we.

“HASHEM REMEMBERS WHAT WE FORGET”

This idea is beautifully captured in the teaching of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasso. On Rosh Hashanah we recite: **“הקדוש ברוך הוא זוכר”** *“כל הנשכחות”* - Hashem remembers all that is forgotten. This operates in both directions. If a person performs a mitzvah and then forgets it, Hashem remembers it. But if a person clings to the mitzvah, reliving it with pride, then, so to speak, Hashem says: *You are holding onto it; I need not.*

Conversely, if a person commits a sin and forgets it, Hashem remembers. But if the person carries it with him - *“והטאתי נגדי תמיד”* - with regret and teshuvah, then Hashem allows it to fade.

A Jew’s avodah, then, is paradoxical:

- Forget your mitzvot
- Remember your responsibilities

WHY A PARAH ADUMAH?

This perspective also sheds light on a striking question: why did Hashem reward Dama specifically with a Parah Adumah? Surely, Hashem has many ways to grant reward.

Dama could have succeeded in business, found treasure, or prospered in countless ways. Why orchestrate such a specific and rather rare event?

The answer is that the reward itself became part of the lesson. By bringing the *Chachamim* back to Dama, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created a moment of contrast, a living encounter between two worlds:

- A non-Jew who excels in a rational mitzvah he understands
- A Jew who is prepared to give everything for a mitzvah beyond comprehension

The Parah Adumah represents the ultimate *chok*, a mitzvah without logical explanation. And yet Klal Yisrael embraces it with complete devotion. Dama teaches the power of human morality at its finest. But Klal Yisrael embodies something even greater: a relationship that transcends understanding. That is the deeper greatness of Am Yisrael.

We live in a world that constantly measures worth through achievement, recognition, and memory. We are conditioned to catalog our accomplishments, to build identities around what we have done. The Torah life asks something radically different. Perform a mitzvah and an act of *chesed* and then move on to the next. Don’t dwell on past accomplishments, rather focus on constant improvement. We ought to serve Hashem as proud individuals - not for what we have previously accomplished but for who we have yet to become. ■



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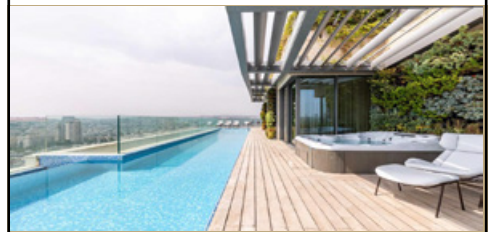
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Awareness and Accounting

The end of *parashat Chukat* describes the various victories of the Jewish people as they conquered land approaching the border of Eretz Yisrael. Most notable was the war against Sichon, king of the Amorites, whose capital city was Cheshbon. Interestingly, the Torah shares some background about the territory and recounts, “*Al kein yom’ru hamoshlim, “Bo’u Cheshbon, tibaneh ve’tikonem ir Sichon* — Concerning this, those who speak in parables [referring to Bilaam] say, “Come to Cheshbon, may it be built and established as the city of Sichon.” (*Bamidbar 21:27*) The Gemara interprets these verses homiletically. “**Hamoshlim**”; these are the people who **rule** over their evil inclination. They will say: “Come to **Cheshbon**,” meaning: Come and let us **calculate** the account of the world, i.e., the financial loss incurred by the fulfillment of a mitzvah in contrast to its reward, and the reward for committing a transgression, i.e., the pleasure and gain



Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt”l

received, in contrast to the loss it entails. (Bava Batra 78b)

Why did our Sages derive this explanation, when it has no correlation to the plain meaning of the text?

Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* answers this question with an important approach. Although the interpretation deviates from the context of the verse, our Sages lived with focused awareness that every moment of their lives matter and understood that Hashem keeps a continuous accounting of our choices and deeds. Therefore, when they saw these words, it automatically brought to mind the concept of reckoning one’s actions, teaching us this important lesson.

Rav Shmuel Rozovsky zt”l, notes that this is the intention of the verse, “*Ashrei adam shome’a li* — Fortunate is the man who listens to me.” (*Mishlei 8:34*) All “listening,” everything one hears, should immediately be associated with something spiritual, something that can help him grow. This is how we live a life of consciousness mirroring a spiritual reality.

Conducting an accounting of one’s deeds and actions indicates an awareness of the need to fill one’s days with purpose and meaning. The Chafetz Chaim zt”l was known

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to reinforce this idea, telling people that after 120 years we will all have to give an accounting of our years, days, minutes and even the seconds of our lives. Each action we do creates a reality and makes an impression. We must be mindful of how the present moment can impact eternity.

Rav Pincus zt"l in *Tiferet Shimshon* extols the tremendous value of constant introspection in that it shows that one cares about his *avodat Hashem*. In any relationship, apathy and lack of concern implies distance and coldness. In contrast, when we think about improving our tefillah or our mitzvot *bein adam l'chavero*, we demonstrate that our mitzvah observance and relationship with Hashem is important.

Continued contemplation is the key for *siyata dishamaya*, Divine assistance to grow and develop in our *avodat Hashem*. ■




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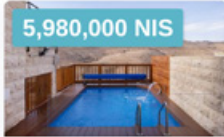

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
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This Shabbat we will read *Parshat Chukat*, which introduces us to the mystical cure for impurity, the mysterious inexplicable concept of the *para aduma* - the red heifer.

The Chasidic Masters saw in these *pesukim* not only the *halachic* remedy to purify those who have become ritually impure, but also an eternal message regarding the relationship between the Jewish people and the *Torah Hakedosha*.

One of the perplexing aspects of the *Para Aduma* ritual, is that the *Kohanim* who were involved in preparing the ashes of the *para aduma* became *tamei*- impure through the process. In preparing the mystical compound which would return others to purity, they in turn became *tamei*.

The *Avodat Elazar of Koshnitz zy'a*, offers an original interpretation to explain the hidden significance of this peculiar phenomenon based on the opening verse - *Zot Chukat HaTorah* -*This is the inexplicable principle of the Torah*.

Our verse not only describes the mysterious nature of the para aduma, but also teaches us a very fundamental idea about Torah itself. Like any remedy, when channeled appropriately it can transform and cure and bring complete healing, or if chas v'shalom it is misused, taken out of context and applied inappropriately then it can bring further deficiency and harm.

The *Admor, Reb Dovid of Tolna zy'a*, clarifies this important idea further:

Why does the verse state this is the

inexplicable principle of the Torah? What is the connection or parallel to be drawn between the para aduma and the entire Torah? Just as the para aduma has the capacity to both purify and render impure, so too the Torah can either be a source of ultimate purity, or chas v'shalom, the opposite. One whose scholarship

and knowledge of Torah leads to haughtiness, rather than humility and refined character, is one who has become spiritually deficient.

The *Netivot Shalom, the Admor of Slonim zy'a* offers a different interpretation of our verse *Zot Chukat HaTorah*. Our verse, explains the Rebbe, is not only introducing us to the *para aduma* as a vehicle to restore purity, but also an eternal message which applies even now in

the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash* and of the *para aduma*. *Zot Chukat HaTorah*- In our current state, without the *Beit HaMikdash* and with no *para aduma*, the vehicle for we Jews to experience some form of a return to purity is by immersing ourselves in the study of *Torah-Zot Chukat HaTorah!*

The *Bat Ayin, the Rebbe of Avrich zy'a*, similarly points out that the *para aduma* is on some level meant to be a *tikkun* (fixing/correction) for the impurity introduced into the world through the *Cheit HaEgel* (The Sin of the Golden Calf).

The Rebbe taught:

Our Master, the Toldot Yaakov Yosef, zy'a, wrote that Cheit HaEgel impacted future



Title page of Bat Ayin, the Rebbe of Avrich

generations, and that the word *egel* is an acronym for the words *arayot* (illicit behavior), *gezel* (theft) and *lashon hara* (inappropriate speech).

So too, the *tikkun* for all of these, as represented by the *para aduma*, also comprises an acronym for the word *egel*-*Avoda*, *Gemilut chasadim* and *Limud Torah*...

The *Bat Ayin* taught that the *para aduma* not only provided a metaphysical healing for those who had come into contact with impurity, but also came to teach us how to overcome the impact that resulted from the *Cheit HaEgel*.

The **Noam Elimelech, Reb Elimelech of Lijensk zy"א**, extends this idea even further. If indeed the essence of the *para aduma*, is meant to be a *tikkun* for the *cheit haeigel*, then in its essence it is a vehicle for *teshuva*, reminding us that a Jew can always return, even after inexplicable, inexcusable mistaken behavior. This very idea, that *Hashem* allows us to return, to leave those transgressions behind, seemingly is beyond our human comprehension- *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* capacity to forgive, his compassion is beyond any logic or human comprehension. Hence, *Zot Chukat haTorah*, this gift of *teshuva* represented by the ritual of the *para aduma* is indeed a *chok*, it is beyond our human capacity to fully appreciate the magnitude and depth of *Hashem's* mercy and compassion.

Yehi Ratzon, may we merit that our *limud Torah*, should indeed bring purity to our minds and hearts, cultivate an opportunity for continued personal growth, and that we soon merit to experience the building of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the return of all its associated sacred and wondrous rituals. ■

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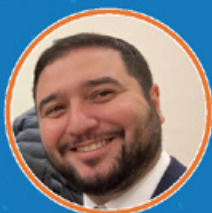
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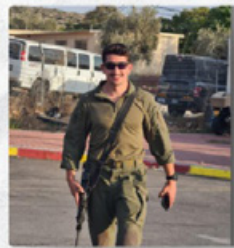


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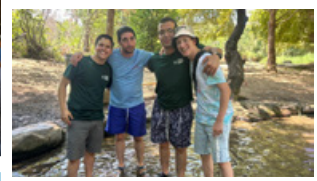


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Paradoxical Sacrifices

When the beloved *tzadik* and Rav of Ramat haSharon, Rav Yaakov Edelstein, zt”l, was a talmid at Yeshivas Ponovezh, a group of students who did not have a strong background in Torah learning joined the yeshivah in the fledgling city of Bnei Brak. The Chazon Ish was aware of the happenings at the yeshivah and asked Rav Yaakov to prevail upon some of the other senior talmidim to dedicate time to learn with and strengthen the weaker, less experienced *bachurim*.

Rav Yaakov who was welcoming and generous with the new talmidim expressed his concerns to the Chazon Ish, and doubted that the most serious yeshivah students, those who were deeply engrossed in their learning, would be willing to sacrifice their time.

The Chazon Ish answered sternly: “If any

talmid resists giving of their time to strengthen a fellow student, ask them if they had put on tefillin that day, and if so, why do they not feel that putting on tefillin is a waste of time. After all, they could have been reviewing their Gemara learning then, as well.”

Rav Edelstein remarked, “The Chazon Ish equated laying tefillin, a *mitzvah d’Oraysa*, a Biblical commandment, with sacrificing some of one’s own learning time in order to strengthen a weaker student.”

.....

In the mid-Thirteenth Century, one of the many expressions of European Christian antisemitism was the “Trial of the Talmud”, accusing it of ‘heretical’ statements and ‘blasphemous’ passages. In 1242, following this ‘trial’, also called the Disputation of Paris, King Louis the Ninth decreed that all copies of the Talmud must be burned. On Erev Shabbos, Parshas Chukas, twenty four wagonloads with an estimated 10,000 volumes of irreplaceable handwritten Torah manuscripts, including Gemara and Rishonim, were publicly set

ablaze. It was a staggering tragedy, especially considering that the printing press did not yet exist. Maharam of Rotenburg, zt”l, witnessed and described this horrific scene, which is detailed in the moving elegy of *Sha’ali Serufa baAish*, and incorporated into our Kinos recited on Tisha B’Av.

Gedolei Yisrael of the era searched for meaning and a message in that communal trauma. Many understood the experience in the context

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of that week's sedra — Parshas Chukas — correlating the burning of the Talmud to the verses of the *Parah Adumah*:

זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר דבר אל־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה

“This is the statute of the Torah which God commanded, saying, ‘Speak to the Children of Israel and have them take for you a perfect red heifer...’” (*Bamidbar*, 19:2)

Rashi explains that because Am Yisrael might doubt the purpose of the Parah Adumah, the Torah uses the term חֻקָּה, “statute”, a decree: אֵין לְךָ רְשׁוּת לְהִרְהֵר אַחֲרֶיהָ, “You have no right to question it.” The ashes of the Parah Adumah were to be sprinkled by the Kohein upon one who had become *tameh l'nefesh*, ritually impure, to remove that form of impurity. And yet, in the process, the Kohein would himself become ritually impure. This paradox makes the Parah Adumah the quintessential חֻק — *chok*, decree or mitzvah whose understanding is beyond all intellectual grasp and questioning. זאת חוקת התורה, “This is a decree of the Torah,” is translated by *Targum Onkelus* as גְּזֵרַת אֹרַיְסָא, it is a *gezeira Oraysa*, “a Biblical decree”.

Some interpreted the Targum's translation as reference to the tragedy of the burning of the Talmud, as the phrase *gezeiras Oraysa* can also mean ‘a decree *against* the Torah’. Beyond deriving a message from the wording of the Targum, however, we should consider the connection between the Parah Adumah and the burning of the Talmud and commentaries:

Rashi frames the Parah Adumah atonement for the *cheit* of the *Egel haZahav*, the Golden Calf. He does this by way of a *mashal*, a parable: the child of a servant soils the king's palace. They say to the servant, ‘Let his mother come and clean up the mess!’ Similarly, let the Heifer, the mother, come and atone for the sin

of the Calf.”

At the *Cheit haEgel*, by forming an idol in the image of a calf, Klal Yisrael so-to-speak ‘replaced’ Hashem, the Cause and Source of all life. Yet, the *tikun* for this great *averah* is not accomplished through addressing the ‘calf’ directly, rather through addressing its source, its mother, the Parah. The Parah Adumah thus cleans up the childish mess of the Egel and reestablishes Hashem as the Source.

Perhaps the *tikun* for the trial and burning of the Talmud is not accomplished directly, through its study alone. Am Yisrael has never lacked serious students, engrossed in their studies. Perhaps the ‘source’ of the *gezeirah* is addressed when we consider the spiritual needs of others and strengthen them — even when it means sacrificing our own Torah study. In fact, the sacrifice of Torah study can paradoxically become its fulfilment: שְׂבִיטוּהָ, “For the nullification of Torah is its establishment.” (*Menachos*, 99b)

Ramchal adds that the sacrifice and burning of the Parah Adumah achieved *taharah*, purity, atonement and a process of restoration. Throughout our exile, since the destruction of the Beis haMikdash and with it the offering of the Parah Adumah, the Torah allows itself to be ‘burnt’, in a sense, for the sake of Klal Yisrael. The ‘sacrifice’ of Torah is now our *kapparah*, atonement, in place of the red heifer.

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את חוקת התורה, דא גזרת אונקטא.

This is the suprarational aspect of Torah: it is the decree against the Torah

The *Shibolei haLeket*, Rav Tzidkiyahu ben Avraham Anav, zt'l, cites a custom of fasting on Erev Shabbos of Parshas Chukas to stimulate atonement (this is also codified by the *Magen Avraham* commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim). While we may not be among those who have adopted this noble custom, we are called upon to reflect on the destruction of our Temple and the generations of suffering and negative decrees rooted in *sinas chinam*. We are called upon to create a tikun through *ahavas chinam* and increasing our dedication to others.

On this week of Parshas Chukas may we consider: if the Torah itself is 'willing' to sacrifice itself for the sake of the Jewish People, what we are willing to sacrifice for Torah? What are we willing to sacrifice for each other?

Excerpt from Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, forthcoming (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786) ■

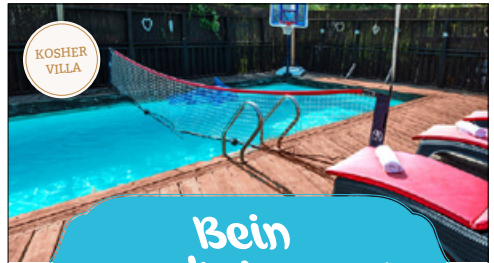
Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.

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Expanding the Scope of the Dairy Bread Decree

Biblically, the mixture of meat and milk through cooking, eating, and, in certain cases, even deriving benefit from it, is strictly prohibited. Our Sages instituted numerous additional safeguards regarding the laws of meat and milk to distance a person from even the slightest possibility of transgression.

The rationale for these safeguards is clear. Unlike other areas of kashrut, such as non-kosher meat or fish, both kosher meat and kosher dairy products are inherently permitted and are commonly found in every kitchen. Because these foods are individually permissible, the possibility of inadvertently mixing them is quite real.

When discussing the various rabbinic restrictions related to meat and milk, it is important to evaluate both the source and scope of each safeguard.

EXPANDING THE DAIRY BREAD DECREE

In recent weeks, we learned that our Sages prohibited the production and consumption of dairy bread, that is, bread made with dairy ingredients such as milk or butter mixed into the dough. Since dairy bread often appears identical to pareve bread, there is a concern that it may inadvertently be eaten together with meat.

Later authorities debated whether the rationale behind this decree should be extended to other areas of Kashrut. Since the purpose of many rabbinic safeguards is to distance a person from the possibility of mixing meat and milk, some authorities argued that similar restrictions should apply elsewhere.

The *Taz* (YD 97:1) maintains that any situation involving a realistic concern of meat and milk being mixed should be included within the spirit of this decree. He cites the case of a spice grinder. In halacha, when a sharp spice is ground, the grinder may absorb the halachic status of the food being processed. Therefore, if a grinder that had always been used for pareve foods was used even once to grind a meat-based spice mixture, for example, garlic that had been cooked with beef—the grinder would require koshering before being used again for pareve foods.

The *Taz* goes even further. He rules that

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spices subsequently produced in such a grinder should not be eaten together with meat, drawing a parallel to the prohibition of dairy bread.

Later authorities discuss another application of this principle. The Responsa *Tzemach Tzedek* and others (see *Pitchei Teshuva* YD 97:1) were asked about the permissibility of mixing milk into wine. The *Tzemach Tzedek* ruled that since wine is commonly consumed at both meat and dairy meals, adding milk to wine should be prohibited for the same reason that dairy bread is prohibited.

Many later authorities, however, strongly disagree with these extensions. As the *Aruch HaShulchan* (YD 97:2) explains, the decree concerning dairy bread is unique and should not be expanded to unrelated cases. Bread serves as the staple accompaniment to most meals and is consumed with a wide variety of foods. Because of bread's central role at the table, the Sages enacted a specific decree regarding dairy bread. According to the *Aruch HaShulchan*, no additional applications should be inferred from this ruling. This approach is also adopted by numerous authorities, including the *Chavot Da'at*, *Pri Chadash*, and *Minchat Yaakov*.

Practically speaking, since the accepted halacha follows the more lenient view, a utensil that was designated as pareve and was accidentally used with either meat or dairy does not become subject to a similar decree. The owner may redesignate the utensil if desired and is not required to label it. Furthermore, pareve food produced with such a

utensil may still be eaten with the corresponding category of food.

For example, if a pareve knife accidentally cut hot dairy food and was then used to cut a sharp food such as onions or garlic, that garlic may be eaten with dairy. We do not impose an additional prohibition based on an analogy to dairy bread.

Similarly, these authorities disagree with the ruling of the *Tzemach Tzedek* and permit dairy ingredients to be mixed into alcoholic beverages such as wine (See *Chatam Sofer* YD 97).

THE CUSTOM OF NOT INTERCHANGING UTENSILS THROUGH KASHERING

There appears to be one notable exception to the principles discussed above. The *Magen Avraham* (OC 509:11) records a custom not to routinely interchange utensils between meat and dairy use through the process of kashering.

The *Magen Avraham* explains that if people were accustomed to kashering utensils back and forth between meat and dairy use, confusion could eventually arise. As a result, one might improperly kasher a utensil, leading to the use of dairy in a meat utensil or vice versa.

For practical reasons, this custom has been preserved by many communities and remains widely observed today. It is noteworthy, however, that the *Aruch HaShulchan* strongly disagrees with this position, consistent with his broader rejection of extending meat-and-milk safeguards beyond their original scope. His criticism of the *Magen Avraham* parallels his disagreement with the *Taz* discussed above.

It should also be noted that Sephardic communities generally never adopted such a custom and have traditionally permitted the kashering of utensils from meat to dairy and vice versa.

Furthermore, even according to the *Magen Avraham*, there are many circumstances in which a utensil may be kashered and redesignated from meat to dairy use or vice

versa. Since the details of these situations are nuanced and involve numerous halachic considerations, one should consult a competent Rav regarding any specific case. ■

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The Quiet Song

Keriat Yam Suf was one of the most dramatic moments in Jewish history. The sea split before us, opening a dry path to freedom. Behind us thundered the Egyptian army, closing in for the kill. Then the waters crashed back into place, swallowing Pharaoh's forces and ending Egypt's pursuit forever.

Additionally, Keriat Yam Suf brought an unprecedented revelation of Hashem. Chazal comment that a simple maid-servant perceived Hashem more clearly at Yam Suf than did Yechezkel, despite his extraordinary prophetic visions. We erupted in joy and song. Moshe led the nation in a stirring shirah of praise and gratitude. Az Yashir contains some of the most iconic pesukim in the entire Torah:

זֶה קְלִי וְאֶנְהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וְאֶרְמְנֶנּוּ

“This is my God and I will glorify Him; the God of my father, and I will exalt Him.”

ה' אִישׁ מְלַחְמָה ה' שָׁמוּ

“Hashem is the Master of war; Hashem is His Name.”

ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

“Hashem shall reign forever and ever.”

Keriat Yam Suf was a once-in-history spectacle, and the grandeur, regality, and majesty of Az Yashir capture that transformative moment.

THE SECOND SONG

There is only one other national shirah in the entire Torah, and it appears in Parshat

Chukat. It is much shorter and much quieter. It does not celebrate grand and spectacular miracles. It does not capture a breathtaking encounter with the Shechinah. There are no vanquished enemies, nothing dramatic, and nothing loud. It is the Shirat HaBe'er, the Song of the Well.

To be sure, Chazal do provide a dramatic backstory. Our Emorite enemies attempted to ambush us by forcing our route through a narrow valley surrounded by steep mountains on either side. We would have been sitting ducks as we passed beneath the looming cliffs. Hashem caused the mountains to converge and crush the ambushers waiting to massacre us. Their blood flowed down through the valley and was carried by the waters of the be'er. We were completely unaware of the danger and only discovered our rescue when we saw the blood-stained waters surrounding the well.

According to Chazal the shira of Chukat celebrates a dramatic military miracle. Yet this is not the simple reading of the shirah. The song itself makes no mention of the defeated ambushers. Instead, it briefly celebrates the well that accompanied us through the desert and the water that sustained us throughout forty years of wandering.

In other words, this song does not focus on a dramatic miracle but on Hashem's daily care. It celebrates water and the other gifts

that sustained us in the desert. Significantly, the song's progression leads directly to the word **נְתַתָּנוּ**, which can be understood as “the inheritance of God” or “the gift of God,” evoking the greatest gift we received in the desert — Hashem's Torah.

The contrast between the Torah's two national songs is striking. One celebrates overt and dramatic miracles. The other celebrates the quiet routines through which Hashem sustained us during forty difficult years in the desert. Both experiences warrant song, though the praise each inspires is expressed very differently.

HEARING HASHEM IN ROUTINE

The balance between these two songs is vital for our lives and even more vital as we navigate our return to Israel and the process of redemption. We naturally sense Hashem's presence during life's dramatic moments. We more readily sense Hashem's presence when we experience events at either end of the emotional spectrum. Routine often masks His presence.

This challenge is even greater in the modern world because our daily lives have changed. On one hand, life has become more stable. Science and technology have created a more predictable world, making it harder to sense our dependence upon Hashem. This is one reason why COVID was so unsettling. In earlier eras, people were far more vulnerable to disease, and epidemics, though tragic, were not as shocking or apocalyptic. We assumed that advances in medicine had largely tamed infectious disease, and COVID shattered that confidence.

Additionally, the pace of modern life has become frenetic. We are constantly busy, connected, and distracted, leaving less time for contemplation and reflection. Together, these

two factors make it more difficult to sense Hashem's presence in everyday life.

The second shirah of Chukat, the Song of the Well, reminds us to recognize Hashem not only in dramatic moments but also in the quiet rhythms of daily existence. It teaches us to find Him behind the curtain of a world that appears stable and highly functional.

This lesson carries even greater significance in Israel. We believe that our return to Eretz Yisrael is divinely inspired and marks the beginning of a process that will ultimately culminate in redemption. When trying to identify redemptive moments in our national return, we naturally focus on the miraculous: great military victories, stunning moments of national achievement such as the return of hostages, or historic shifts such as our return to the biblical heartland in 1967. We are always searching for moments that resemble Kariat Yam Suf.

Baruch Hashem, we have experienced many such moments. The Hallel we recite on days of national triumph and the gratitude we feel for the restoration of Jewish sovereignty reflect our recognition of these extraordinary moments.

We are less accustomed to identifying redemption in the ordinary and the everyday.

REDEMPTION IN THE ORDINARY

My rebbe, Rav Amital, noted that the final berachah of Sheva Berachot is rooted in Yirmiyahu's description of the sounds that will fill a redeemed Yerushalayim. However, when Chazal incorporated the prophecy into the berachah, they modified its ending in a

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notable way. The original prophecy is:
קול שְׂשׂוֹן וְקוֹל שְׂמִיחָה קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה קוֹל
אֲמָרִים הוֹדוּ אֵת ה' צְבָקוֹת כִּי טוֹב ה' כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ
מִבָּאִים תּוֹדָה בֵּית ה'

“The sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say: ‘Give thanks to Hashem of Hosts, for Hashem is good, for His kindness endures forever,’ as they bring thanksgiving offerings to the House of Hashem.”

Yet when Chazal formulated the concluding berachah of Sheva Berachot, they replaced the fifth voice with a different one:

קוֹל מִצְהָלוֹת חֲתָנִים מְחַפְּתִים וְנִעָרִים מִמְּשֻׁתָּה
גְּיָיִתִּים

“The sound of grooms rejoicing from their chuppot and young men from their festive celebrations and song.”

Rav Amital suggested that Chazal intentionally shifted the focus. Instead of highlighting the sounds of pilgrims bringing korbanot to the Beit HaMikdash, they emphasized the sounds of ordinary life. They wanted us to recognize redemption not only in great religious ceremonies or dramatic national moments, but also in the simple joy of young people celebrating together. Redemption is found not only in the spectacular but also in the everyday.

Similarly, Zecharyah, whose prophecies often employ sweeping and apocalyptic imagery, describes redemption in remarkably ordinary terms:

עוֹד יֵשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ
מִשְׁעָנְתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מַרְבֵּי יָמִים

“Old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with a staff in hand because of great age.”

Zecharyah trains us to recognize redemption not only when the sea parts, but also in

the slow and steady progress of ordinary life.

READING OUR MOMENT

As these wars continue, the story has become more difficult to read. There have been important victories, but there have also been painful losses. The confidence that accompanied the early stages of our response to October 7 has gradually given way to uncertainty. More recently, the conflict with Iran has left many Israelis wondering how history will assess this chapter.

These questions matter, but we cannot allow this ambiguity to distract us from the larger arc of our national story. Redemption does not always announce itself through dramatic moments. Sometimes it advances quietly.

Our state is stronger and more secure than at any point in Jewish history. Baruch Hashem, our economy continues to flourish. For the first time in nearly two thousand years, more Jews live in Israel than in any other country. Hopefully, we are moving toward a reality in which the majority of world Jewry will once again live in the Land of Israel.

These are not minor achievements, even if they are less dramatic than the military victories we celebrate or the historic breakthroughs for which we continue to hope.

It is easier to stand at the edge of a splitting sea and sing to Hashem. It is harder to stand in a desert and thank Him for slower and more gradual progress. The second shira of the Torah reminds us just how important that quieter song can be. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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The Story We Must Tell

The haftorah of Chukat presents one of the longest speeches in Sefer Shoftim. Before Yiftach wages war against Bnei Amon, he recounts the history of the Jewish people in remarkable detail. He reviews the travels through the desert, the requests made peacefully to Edom and Moav, the confrontation with Sichon and the eventual settlement of the land. At first glance, the speech feels almost excessive. Why revisit events that took place three hundred years earlier?

The Abarbanel explains that Yiftach was doing far more than reviewing historical facts. He was establishing the moral legitimacy of Klal Yisrael's presence in the land. Yiftach wanted to make clear that the Jewish people were not a nation of violence or conquest. Bnei Yisrael had requested passage peacefully. They avoided unnecessary conflict. The land under dispute had already been conquered from Ammon by Sichon before Israel ever fought for it. For the Abarbanel, this


speech is fundamentally about moral clarity.




Yiftach understands that a nation must know how to tell its story truthfully and confidently. If a people loses clarity about its own history, others will define that history in its place. The Malbim develops this further. He notes that although Yiftach was introduced as a "גבור חיל," a mighty warrior, he does not begin with battle. He begins with words, trying to provide explanation and explicit memory. Only after attempting diplomacy and historical clarification does war become unavoidable.




There is something profoundly significant about this sequence. Yiftach recognizes that strength alone cannot sustain a nation. A people also needs memory to understand where it came from, what it stands for and the principles that shaped its journey. Perhaps that is why the speech reaches back centuries. Jewish history in Tanach is never treated as distant or irrelevant. The past remains alive because it defines identity in the present. Memory is not nostalgia, it is responsibility. A nation that remembers its story preserves not only its past, but its moral compass for the future.

In many ways, this feels deeply contemporary. We are living in a moment when history itself is contested, simplified and rewritten with startling speed. The haftorah reminds us that memory is not passive. It requires transmission, clarity and responsibility. Yiftach teaches that telling our story is not merely an act of self-defense. It is an affirmation of who we are, where we came from and the values that continue to guide us forward. ■

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Unlocking Tefilla Through Its Words

One of the greatest challenges in our Avodat Hashem today is developing a genuine connection to Hashem through Tefilla. We daven regularly, attend shul, and faithfully recite the words, but how often do we truly feel that we are standing before Hashem and speaking with Him? If we are honest with ourselves, many of us would admit that although we occasionally experience moments of inspiration, our Tefillot often feel routine, dry, and disconnect-

ed. We do not want this to be our reality, yet many of us struggle to know how to change it.

So where do we begin?



The *Tziyunei Derech* suggests that perhaps we should start from a place that feels accessible: the words themselves. By exploring the meaning and depth embedded within the text of our Tefillot, we can begin to awaken the emotions, awareness, and yearning that lead

to a genuine relationship with Hashem. **Rav Shlomo Wolbe** writes that when a person finds himself unable to concentrate during davening, he should focus on the specific words he is recit-

ing and work to understand their meaning. Through that process, he can regain focus and reconnect to his Tefilla.

The *Saba of Kelm* teaches that when the Anshei Knesset HaGedola composed the sidur, they infused every word with profound ideas and spiritual depth. If we seek inspiration in our tefilla, we must invest time in uncovering those layers of meaning. He offers a beautiful analogy - Just as Hashem created food with taste so that we would enjoy eating and nourish our bodies, the Anshei Knesset HaGedola “seasoned” our Tefillot with rich and meaningful concepts so that we would



find pleasure in Tefilla and nourish our Neshamot. Our task is to delve beneath the surface and discover those treasures.

It is my hope that through this column, we can explore some of these ideas together and deepen our experience of Tefilla. Writing a column on Tefilla is a daunting task because it almost implies that the writer is an expert on the subject, which could not be farther from the truth. But as **Rav Yissachar Rubin**, the author of the sefer

טללי אורות: באורי תפילה writes, *“It would be appropriate for me to be too scared and intimidated to delve into the Kodshei HaKedoshim, the most holy words of the Anshei Knesset haGedola, words which are from another world, and to say to myself – who am I to take on this monumental task, this place where you are “standing” is holy ground - אדמת קודש הוא. Yet upon reflection, I realized that my role is merely to gather together and to organize the ideas of all of our sages throughout the generations regarding Tefilla, and to make those ideas more accessible to people who want to work on their Tefilla.”*

Inspired by these words, I will try b'Ezrat Hashem to focus each week on a different section of the davening, sharing insights from our meforshim. Some of the material will be familiar to those who participated in

our previous Tefilla series, drawing primarily from *Talalei Orot* and *Olam HaTefillot*, while much of it will be new, based largely on the teachings found in *Nefesh Shimshon*. I encourage you to clip sections that resonate with you and place them in your siddur, or jot meaningful insights in the margins. In this way, these ideas can become a lasting part of your daily Tefilla rather than something that is quickly forgotten.

It is my hope that the process of researching and writing this column will strengthen my own Tefilla, and that together we can grow steadily and learn to connect with HaKadosh Baruch Hu in a more real and meaningful way each day. ■



This year, the OU Israel Women's Division was privileged to welcome several new staff members: Aliza Back, our Yerushalayim Coordinator; Basya Teitelbaum, our Beit Shemesh Coordinator; and Chaya Kesselman, our ATID Young Olot Coordinator. Throughout the year, they will contribute on a rotating basis additional insights on Tefilla, enriching our collective journey toward more meaningful Tefilla.

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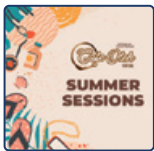


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Rav Aryeh Levin on Pirkei Avot (5:7): Making Space for Others

“No man ever said to his friend, ‘There is insufficient space for me to sleep in Yerushalayim.’” (Avot 5:7)

Rav Chaim Volozhin interpreted the above Mishnah to mean that people often feel that they are in competition with one another in their professional careers and in pursuit of financial gain. At times, enmity develops between people as a result of thinking that one’s fellow’s financial success is responsible for one’s own financial woes.

But a person of faith recognizes that the amount of money a man is destined to earn is fixed at the beginning of the year (*Beitzah* 16a). No man can even touch a hairsbreadth of what is prepared for his friend. Thus, when one was exposed to the sacred environs of Yerushalayim and entered the hallowed space of the Beit Hamikdash, a Jew was cognizant of this truth and therefore never felt that a friend was pushing him out or, God forbid, that a fellow Jew was the cause of his financial misery. (*Ruach Chaim* 5:7)

FINDING ROOM IN ONE’S HEART

The eminent Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau cited a beautiful insight offered by the Rebbe of

Kotzk, who interpreted this Mishnah homiletically. Those who feel that there is insufficient room are people who want everything for themselves and are not prepared to compromise with anyone else. One who feels that there isn’t adequate space is one who refuses to yield to others. In order to live together, people must make way for one another. They



Rabbi Aryeh Levin zt”l

must lower their heads in humility and make do with little. Then they will have breadth. (cf. *Emet MiKotzk Titzmach*) (Rav Lau on Pirkei Avos, vol. 3, p. 760)

In a similar vein, Rav Chaim Volozhin commented on the custom of taking three steps back at the conclusion of the daily Amidah: “Why do we take three steps back before mentioning the concept of peace? We step backwards to show that we are ready

to retreat from our seemingly intractable position for the sake of peace.” (ohr.edu, The Amidah, part 36)

NOT ENOUGH SEATS

In regard to the above Mishnah in Avot (5:7), Rav Aryeh Levin offered a novel insight by citing the well-known Talmudic passage that tells of the new policy adopted in the study hall of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah. Under his new

leadership, he accepted whoever wanted to study and allowed them to enter the beit midrash, even those whose “inner thoughts did not match his outer appearance.” The Talmud says that at least 400 benches were added that day, and some say 600 benches were newly installed. (Berachot 28a)

Rav Aryeh asked why there was a need for an enormous number of new benches to be placed in the study hall when not nearly that many new students entered. He answered that the change in policy meant that many of the students who now entered the study hall possessed unrefined character traits. Thus, the new students were less accommodating and tolerant of their fellow students. Although it had previously been crowded in the study hall, the students’ loving-kindness and compassion for one another meant that they never felt cramped. Regrettably, the new students had not yet developed the lofty character traits necessary to make space for others, both in a physical and spiritual sense. (*Rav Aryeh Haya Omer*, Raz, p. 326)

THE SHECHINAH RESTS IN THIS HOME

This teaching of Rav Aryeh was evident in the way he lived his life and how he and his wife literally found space for others in their tiny home. The following story captures this exceptional lesson. Professor Benzion Werbin, who served as the head of the Pediatric Department at Hadassah Hospital in the mid-1900s, shared the following moving recollection from his childhood:

“In 1923, when only a boy of ten, I fell and broke my leg. My dear mother rushed me from our home in Be’er Ya’akov to Hadassah Hospital, where I underwent a complicated operation.

“I was obliged to remain in Jerusalem under the doctors’ close supervision. My mother

took me to see Rav Aryeh, who was a cousin of my father, and when Rebbetzin Tzipporah Chanah, Rav Aryeh’s wife, heard about this medical requirement she insisted: ‘You must stay with us!’ So it came to be that I was privileged to stay for a time with the great Tzaddik and his wife.”

“I lived in their home for two whole months, and even though the Rebbetzin had her hands full with their six small children, a few of whom slept in the hallway, I felt at home there. Never have I encountered such a loving and hospitable family. Never did I hear a voice raised in anger, never a word of complaint or sign of irritation from either the Rav or the Rebbetzin.”

“When Rav Aryeh came home each evening after a long day of teaching and study, he would go straight to his wife and greet her, asking how she felt and how her day had been. Then he would turn to his children, caress them, and ask: ‘What did you learn in *cheder* today?’

“Once I had gained a reputation in the medical world and had ample means, I longed to do something for the Tzaddik in the way of financial support to repay him. He invariably replied, ‘I have everything I need, thank God, more than enough! What can I tell you? Money has never meant much to me’...”

In closing, Professor Werbin added, “Now,

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thank God, I have reached my elder years, but a memory I cherish above almost all others is that of those two months I spent in the presence of two saintly souls, Rav Aryeh and his wife, in a home where you could truly say: Here the *Shechinah* resides!" (A Tzaddik for Eternity, Raz, pp. 153–155)

EXCEPTIONAL HACHNASAT ORCHIM IN YERUSHALAYIM

The simple meaning of the miracle of there being ample space enumerated in the Mishnah above (*Pirkei Avot* 5:7) is that everyone had sufficient room due to the generosity of the residents of Yerushalayim, who sought out guests and never expressed impatience, even if someone stayed for several weeks. We find a similar teaching in the Talmud, which states that when people love each other deeply, they can lie together on the edge of a sword, but if the love between them wanes, then even

a bed ten cubits wide is not large enough for them (*Sanhedrin* 7a).

This mishnah in *Avot* teaches us that when there is room in the heart, there is room in the home. When there is love and affection among people, then no one ever tells his fellow, "I have no place for you to stay." ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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Covering One's Face During *Birkat Kohanim*

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: In *chutz la'aretz*, when they do *Birkat Kohanim* (on *Yom Tov*), men cover their faces with their *tallit*. Upon making *aliya*, I rarely see people doing so. Is there a halachic *machloket* on the matter, or is it just a matter of *minhag*? What should I be doing?

Answer: The main halachic issue here is that one is not supposed to look at the *kohanim* during *Birkat Kohanim*. The sources begin with the *mishna* (Megilla 24b) that a *kohen* with blemishes on his hands must not do *Birkat Kohanim* because it can cause people to stare at the *kohen's* hands. The Yerushalmi (Megilla 4:8) says that this shows that it is forbidden for the congregation to look, irrespective of whether the *kohanim* have blemishes, because it can cause them to not properly concentrate on the *berachot*. This

is codified by the Rambam (Tefilla 14:7) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 128:23). (This concern is best understood according to the opinion that the *tzibbur* has a *mitzva* to accept the *kohanim's beracha*; see Be'ur Halacha to 128:1; Dvar Avraham I:31.) The Mishna Berura (128:89) says, that since concentration is the problem, one should not be looking anywhere, and that the halacha only precludes extended looking, as only this would impair one's concentration.

The explanation that most people think of is that it is disrespectful and potentially dangerous to look at a *kohen's* hands during *Birkat Kohanim* because of a special Divine Presence (*Shechina*) that exists there. Indeed, the *gemara* (Chagiga 16a) says that doing so could damage one's vision. The Beit Yosef (OC 128) points out that the *Shechina* is on the hands only in the *Beit Hamikdash*, where they would use the *Shem Hameforash* during *Birkat Kohanim*, and so our present-day practice of not looking relates only to concentration. (Some kabbalistically oriented sources say that the danger effect still exists – see Da'at Torah to the Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*) Although we have seen that it should thus be permitted to look casually, the Mishna Berura (*ibid.*) comments that the *minhag* is to not look at all as a remembrance of the care taken in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

In fact, some take further precautions. The

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Beit Yosef (ibid.) reports a *minhag*, which is indeed followed broadly today, for each *kohen* to pull their *tallit* over his head and even his hands. This prevents the *kohanim* from being distracted by the people, and the people from being distracted by the *kohanim*. By the same token, it also prevents seeing the hands, with the *Shechina* implications.

If this is not enough, there is the *minhag* you ask about, which is mentioned and encouraged by the Kaf Hachayim (OC 128:142), that members of the *tzibbur* also cover their heads with a *tallit*. He says that if one does not cover his eyes with a *tallit*, he at least should shut his eyes. Some mention (see Piskei Teshuvot 128:55) covering children with a *tallit*. This is probably more logical if the problem is the *Shechina* issue as opposed to concentration, as the latter is unlikely to be important for a child. At some point, apparently quite recently and as a grass roots idea, some fathers started putting their hands on their child's head, as some sort of conduit for the *beracha* of the *kohanim* to land well on the children. It could be that this was borrowed from the practice of fathers to put their hands on their children's

heads when blessing them (including with *Birkat Kohanim*) on Friday night.

We have seen how the *minhag* you experienced in *chutz la'aretz*, was an extension of an extension of an extension. It could be that it just did not spread to Israeli communities here as much as abroad. The explanation could be that when *Birkat Kohanim* is a rare, highly anticipated event, people are more inclined to seek every possible enhancement, but not in Israel, where its frequency fosters a more basic approach.

Now that you live in *Eretz Yisrael*, we suggest to follow the local practice. However, especially since people do not look around at this time, you may, if you prefer, cover your head during *Birkat Kohanim*, as this is not divisive. ■

Having a dispute?



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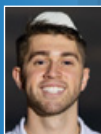
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Have You Heard About These Ceremonies?

These days, in Kibbutz Be'eri, the homes damaged on October 7 are being torn down. But these demolitions are not only acts of clearing away ruins. They have become ceremonies of memory, grief, faith, and rebuilding.

Take Eli Sharabi. He came to see the place where his wife, Lianne, and his daughters, Noiya and Yahel, were murdered.

“It was important for me to be here,” he said as the demolition began. “We are the Jewish people. We have a very special DNA — the DNA of rebuilding. I think that precisely in order to honor those who fell, I must move forward and build a life of action and meaning.”

Not far away, the home of Rachel Fricker

was also demolished.

“A million emotions are mixed together,” she said as she watched the walls come down. “For twelve and a half hours, the terrorists were inside this house with me.”

Rachel arrived with rabbis and friends. “I recited Birkat Hagomel, the blessing said after surviving danger. I said Mizmor Letodah, a psalm of thanksgiving, and we raised a glass — to the home that was, and to the home that will yet be built.”

She shared another striking story. Not long ago, a rabbi asked to take ashes from her house for his son’s wedding, in keeping with the custom of placing ashes on the groom’s head as a remembrance of destruction. When he entered the house, he saw a fox. For those familiar with the story, it immediately called to mind Rabbi Akiva, who saw a fox emerging from the ruins of the Temple and understood it as a sign that the place would one day be rebuilt.

“It was a sign for me, too,” Rachel said.

After the ceremony, she returned to her caravilla in Hatzertim “with a feeling of peace, of closure.” Rachel, who also manages the Be’eri synagogue, added that a new, large synagogue is soon to be built in the center of the kibbutz.

Then there is Avida Bachar, who managed Be’eri’s agriculture. On that morning, he lost



his wife, Dana, his son, Carmel, and his leg.

“This was a home of life,” he said, standing opposite the tractor that had come to demolish his house. “You meet a woman, build a family, build a life — and in one second, everything is destroyed. But when you look at things from above, you say to yourself: We must build life and family again.”

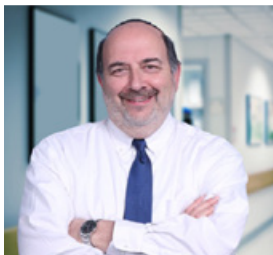
Since October 7, Avida has carried with him everywhere what he calls his “crying towel.” He used it often at the ceremony, especially when his friends stood beside him and sang Shir LaMa’alot, A Song of Ascents, moments before the demolition began.

He also wanted to convey two messages: a firm security message to the outside — “I woke up. Gaza must cease to exist” — and a message of unity within: “For the first time, I got to know my people, and I am awed by their strength.”

Eli, Rachel, Avida — thank you for these words. They, too, are part of the rebuilding. ■

Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.

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Emet V'Emunah: The Legacy of Eliyahu and Elisha

It is difficult to think of a teacher and student more different from one another than Eliyahu and Elisha. Consider the contrast between Eliyahu, the unyielding advocate of absolute loyalty to God, who preferred isolation to life in an imperfect society; and Elisha, the man of the people, who almost casually performed miracles to help those around him, creating a dynamic environment within which God's Presence would be felt palpably by those around him.

Despite their different personalities, we find many parallels between the two prophets, perhaps most blatantly the revival of a child from the dead. According to Hazal, the child revived by Eliyahu was Yonah ben Amitai. Yonah was called the son of Amitai from the root אמת, Truth, for upon his revival his mother cried out, "Now I know that the word of God in your mouth is indeed Truth". The child revived by Elisha was the prophet Habakuk, the Navi whose prayer is held up as a paradigm of successful dialogue with Hashem and who reduced the entire Torah to one fundamental principle: "צדיק באמונתו יחיה" - the righteous live by faith.

Together, reflecting the personae of their spiritual fathers, Yonah and Habakuk represent אמת ואמונה. Not coincidentally, these are the opening words of the concluding bracha

following Kriat Shema at Maariv. The morning bracha, אמת ויציב, refers to the chessed that Hashem performed for us in the past - taking us out of Mitzrayim, splitting the sea and sustaining us miraculously in the desert. In contrast, the bracha of אמת ואמונה recited at night refers to the future Geulah, which we await expectantly. The first part of this bracha is written in the present tense - all the actions that Hashem performed on our behalf in the past are still relevant and applicable, and re-occur on a daily basis, as Hashem continues to save us from the hands of our enemies.

Living with a foundation of Emunah means living with an awareness of Yad Hashem in our lives on a daily basis. This is the message of Eliyahu and Elisha, Yonah and Habakuk. If we feel a profound sense of attachment and connection to Hashem through the chessed that He performed for us in the past, which cemented our relationship in the realm of אמת, then we can continue to live each day with a feeling of אמונה, the expectation that the גאולה is imminent.

This explains the sudden departure from the narrative of the kings in Sefer Melachim, with its focus on the miracles of the prophets rather than on the continuing decline into complete spiritual dissolution on the part of the kings of Israel. We had reached a point

where it seemed as though the kingdom of Israel was approaching its end. The dynasty of Yerov'am was short-lived after his having deviated from the word of Hashem, as foretold by Ahiyah HaShiloni. It seemed as though Ba'asha had established his own dynasty, until his son Elah ruled for only two years before being conspired against by Zimri, who ruled for only 7 days before he himself was put to death, and the nation split their allegiance between Tivni ben Ginat and 'Omri. And then, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, 'Omri revealed himself to be a source of national strength; he built the foundation of a strong malchut, moving the capital to Shomron and fortifying the city. His son, Achav, followed in his father's footsteps, building roads and trying to improve the material welfare of the people. Nevertheless, the spiritual level of these kings and their subjects was abysmal, with the introduction of new powerful and diverse forms of Avodah Zara into the nation. It is precisely then that the narrative is interrupted with the miracles of Eliyahu and Elisha. Precisely when the situation is so dire, when the very kings who are meant to bring us closer to Hashem are the source of greater distance, we are reminded of His eternal Presence among the Jewish people. Even that which appears beyond hope, without any sign of life, may be revived. Before the

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Malchut declines and dissolves, we are taught that ultimately Emunah will carry the day, and the Geulah will come. Emet v'Emunah, the eternal truth of the Chessed of past salvation, and firm belief in the light of the future redemption which is being revealed daily, slowly but surely dispelling the darkness; this is the enduring legacy of Eliyahu and Elisha. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began it's fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.



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Do Shared Hobbies Really Matter in a Relationship?

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Chayim asks:

Hi Aleeza! I'm sorting through the system and I see a lot of potential matches for my candidate, and I wanted your advice -

How important is it to have mutual hobbies/interests?

My candidate loves hiking, but does that have an actual effect on a relationship? Doesn't personality matter more?

Aleeza answers:

This is such a great question because it's one of the common places people get stuck when evaluating a match.

The short answer is this: shared hobbies are nice to have, but they are not the foundation of a healthy relationship. Shared values, life goals, and relationship skills matter far more.

Many people assume that because two people both love hiking, photography, pickleball, or travel, they must be compatible. The truth is that shared interests can make the beginning of a relationship easier and more fun, but they don't necessarily tell you whether two people can build a life together.

I've worked with thousands of singles, and I've seen wonderful marriages where the couple shares very few hobbies. What they

do share is a vision for their future, mutual respect, emotional maturity, and a commitment to growing together.

Let's take hiking as an example.

If one person loves hiking and the other prefers spending weekends reading at home, that alone is not a problem. The question isn't whether they enjoy the same activity. The question is whether they can support and appreciate each other's interests. One partner can go hiking with friends while the other enjoys their own hobbies. Healthy couples don't need to do everything together.

However, there are situations where an interest becomes much more important because it is tied to a person's values or life goals.

For example, if someone dreams of spending every free weekend backpacking through national parks, taking adventure trips around the world, and living a highly outdoors-oriented lifestyle, then hiking isn't just a hobby. It's part of how they envision their future. In that case, finding someone who enjoys a similar lifestyle may be important.

Another example might be someone whose religious life is centered around music. If leading communal music experiences is a major part of their identity, then a partner's comfort with that lifestyle could significantly impact

the relationship.

Notice the difference. The activity itself isn't the issue. The question is whether it connects to something deeper.

When assessing a match, I encourage people to ask: What does this hobby represent? Is it simply something fun they enjoy, or is it an expression of a core value, identity, or life vision?

So when you're reviewing potential matches for your candidate, don't focus first on whether they both love hiking. Focus on whether they share the things that sustain a relationship over decades: values, character, communication, commitment, and a compatible vision for the future.

Those are the things that carry a marriage long after the hiking boots come off.

Blessings, Aleeza ■

♥

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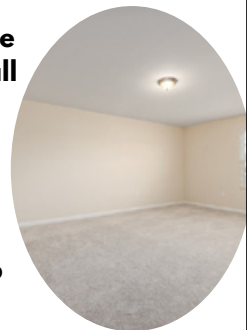


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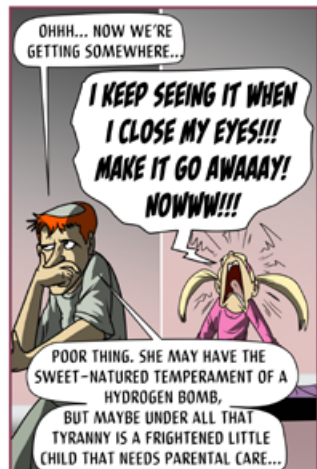


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OH, FUNNY, DADDY. REALLY... HILARIOUS...

NOOOO, I SAW A MOVIE AT JENNY'S HOUSE, AND THERE WAS A SCARY BAD-GUY MAN WITH A HORRIBLE BEARD...

MR. CODSHOW?

NOOO!! WE WATCHED "ALADDIN" AND THE BADDY CALLED JAFAR TURNED INTO A HUGE SNAAKE!

OH... NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE...

I KEEP SEEING IT WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES!!! MAKE IT GO AWAAAY! NOWWW!!!

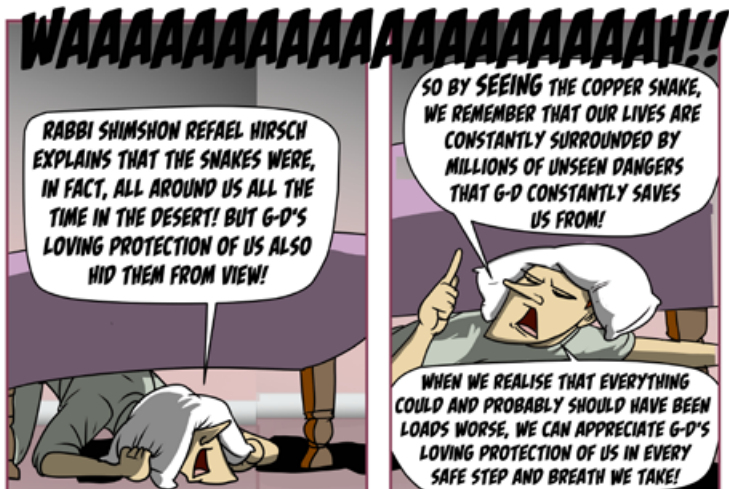
POOR THING. SHE MAY HAVE THE SWEET-NATURED TEMPERAMENT OF A HYDROGEN BOMB, BUT MAYBE UNDER ALL THAT TYRANNY IS A FRIGHTENED LITTLE CHILD THAT NEEDS PARENTAL CARE...

OH, I REALLY HOPE HE'S NOT THINKING WHAT I THINK HE'S THINKING...

FEAR NOT, MY LITTLE BLAST-ENDED SKREW! DADDY KNOWS THE VERY THING FOR IT...

NOT SPECIALIST REVERSE-PSYCHOLOGY TREATMENT...

THIS CALLS FOR SPECIALIST REVERSE-PSYCHOLOGY TREATMENT!





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EZRA SILTON
CHASHMODIIN CHAPTER
DIRECTOR



JESSE MUSKATT
9TH GRADE MODIIN

STRENGTH OR FAITH?

UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM

When we think of antisemitism, we often think of Amalek. But our parsha offers another lens.

Moshe asks Edom for permission to pass through their land on the way to Israel. Despite a respectful request, Edom refuses and mobilizes for war. Reading the pesukim, it is difficult to understand such hostility. Rashi connects this to the ancient conflict between Yaakov and Esav — Edom being Esav’s descendants.

This illustrates the famous principle from the Sifri on Bereshit: הַלֵּכָה הִיא בְּדִוּעַ שְׂעֵשׂוֹ שׁוֹנֵא לִיַּעֲקֹב — it is a known rule that Esav hates Yaakov.

The Torah is teaching us something timeless: certain hatred is irrational and deep-rooted. But the Torah also models how to navigate it — with dignity, patience, and realism. This is a message we must internalize when confronting our enemies today.

In Parshat חֻקַּת , Bnei Yisrael once again find themselves without water. Hashem commands Moshe to speak to a stone, and water would rush out. Instead, Moshe strikes the stone. Although water comes out, Hashem is displeased with him and decrees that Moshe will be forbidden from entering Eretz Yisrael.

Why was this considered such a serious sin? Hashem wanted to teach Bnei Yisrael that all blessing comes from Him alone. By speaking to the rock, Moshe would have demonstrated the power of Hashem’s word and the importance of relying on Him. By striking the rock, that message was diminished.

For someone as great as Moshe, even a small departure from Hashem’s command carried great significance. From this we learn an important lesson: although we are expected to make an effort, our trust must always remain in Hashem, the true source of everything we achieve. ■





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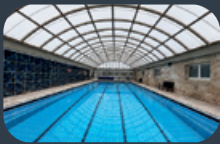
2

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1

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SWIMMINGPOOL



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