TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



חקת

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



הוּא יִתְחַטָּא־בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִטְהָר וְאִם־לֹא יִתְחַטָּא בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לֹא יִטְהָר - ***"He shall purify himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day become pure; but if he will not purify himself on the third day, then on the seventh day he will not become pure."*** (19:12)

Literally, this verse teaches that one who has become defiled by contact with a corpse must be sprinkled with water containing the ashes of the parah adumah/ red heifer on the third and seventh days.

R' Chaim Tirer z"l (1760-1817; better known as **"R' Chaim of Czernowitz"** offers an additional lesson:

The "third day" refers to the Torah, which the Gemara (Shabbat 88) refers to as the **אוֹרְיָאן תְּלִיתַאי** - "Tripartite Torah." [Some interpret this as referring to the three parts that make up the acronym Tanach — Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim.] The "seventh day" refers to Shabbat. The only way for a person to purify his soul is through study of Torah and observing the sanctity of Shabbat. (Be'er Mayim Chaim)

וְנָתַן עָלָיו מַיִם חַיִּים אֶל־כֶּלִי - "*He shall put upon it mayim chaim / spring water in a kli / vessel*." (19:17)



The Torah is referred to as "mayim" (see Yeshayah 55:1) and as "chaim" (Mishlei 3:18). "Kli" is an acronym of Kohen, Levi, Yisrael. Here we have an allusion to the custom of calling a Kohen, a Levi, and a Yisrael up to the Torah. (Da'at Zekeinim Mi'Ba'alei Ha'Tosafot)

זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה' לֵאמֹר - *"This is the Chukah / decree of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded . . ." (19:2)*

Rashi z"l writes: Because the Yetzer Ha'ra and the nations of the world taunt the Jewish People, saying, "What is this commandment and what reason is there for it," the Torah describes it as a "Chukah," implying: "It is an decree from before Me; you have no right to question it."

R' David Kimchi z"l (Radak; 1160–1235; Narbonne, France) writes: Even the Chukim, about which is it said, "They have no reason," it is true that they do not have a reason that can be understood by the majority of people. However, a wise person who studies the commandment carefully will find a clear and understandable reason. (Hakdamat Ha'Radak L'Sefer Yehoshua)

"A person attains a higher level of piety by conquering his anger than he would by fasting a thousand days." ~ R' Moshe Leib of Sassov zt"l

The Fast of Erev Shabbat Parashat Chukas

R' Avraham Abele Gombiner z"l (the "Magen Avraham," one of the most important commentators on the Shulchan Aruch; Poland; died 1682) writes: On Friday of the week in which Parashat Chukas is read, some individuals have the custom to fast because, on that day in 5004 [1244], twenty wagon-loads of Sefarim / Torah works were burned in France.

This fast day was not established on the day of the month on which that tragedy occurred, as most commemorations are, because it was revealed to the sages of that time in a dream that the decree was connected with the Parashah, as we read (19:2), **זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה** - "This is the decree [regarding] the Torah."

Also, in 5408 [1648, during the Chmielnicki Massacres], two great Jewish communities were destroyed on that day. (Magen Avraham, end of ch.580)

R' Tzidkiyah ben Avraham Ha'rofeh z"l (Italy; died 1275) lived at the time of the first event above. He provides some additional (and some different) details:

We have written this as a remembrance of what occurred in our own days due to our many sins — the Torah of our Elokim, approximately 24 wagon-loads of books of Talmud, Halachah and Aggedeta, was burned in France on Friday of Parashat Chukat in the year 5002 [1242]. We heard from some of the rabbis who were present that they asked through a dream whether this was a Divine decree, and they were answered: "This is the decree [regarding] the Torah."

They decreed that, from that day onward, individuals who are able to, should fast on Friday of the week of Parashat Chukat. – May its ashes atone for us like a burnt-offering on the altar's pyre! (Shibbolei Ha'lekket 263)

וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בֵּאלֹקִים וּבְמֹשֶׁה לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתֻנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוּת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לֶחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל - "***The people spoke against Elokim and Moshe: 'Why did you bring us up from Egypt to die in this Wilderness, for there is no food and no water, and our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food?***'" (21:5)

In Parashat Be'ha'alotecha we read that Bnei Yisrael complained about a lack of meat. The question is asked: If mahn could taste like anything, why didn't they imagine that it tasted like meat?

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust) answers: In the desert Bnei Yisrael were prohibited to eat meat except when they brought a sacrifice. If the mahn could taste like meat, it would effectively circumvent this prohibition. Therefore, the mahn could not taste like meat. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)



זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה – '***This is the statute of the Torah***.' (19:2)

The parsha begins with the words, chukas haTorah, statute of the Torah, when, in fact, it is addressing the laws of Parah Adumah, Red Cow, which is a chok, statute whose rationale defies human logic. In other words, the parsha should have begun with the words, "This is the statute of the Red Cow."

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, takes a practical approach towards explaining this, saying that a corollary exists between Torah and Parah, in that the anomaly which distinguishes Parah Adumah as a chok likewise applies to the Torah. The primary chok of Parah Adumah is the fact that, mitaheres es ha'tameim u'mitamaas es ha'tehorim. The spiritually contaminated person becomes tahor,

pure, when the mixture of water and ashes is sprinkled upon him, while the one who prepares the mixture himself becomes tamei, impure.

Thus, there are two perspectives, vantage points, for viewing the Parah Adumah: purifying agent; contaminant. Similarly, concerning Torah knowledge, there are variant ways to view the knowledge one has amassed.

A yeshivah student is studying in the bais hamedrash. Before him on a table are a number of tomes of Talmud, each opened to a specific page. Also on the table are opened volumes of commentary on the Talmud, from the Rishonim, Early Commentators, to contemporary scholars. Their notes and insights are all before the student as he works his way through a sugya, topic.

With each commentary, his insight becomes clearer, his understanding of the topic more profound, as he delves deeper, plumbing the depths of the various insights into the Talmud.

At that point, a young man who has just recently joined the ranks of the observant, whose erudition is limited to a few verses of Chumash, comes over and stares at this scenario. Not really understanding what is taking place before his eyes, and why so many books are open on the table, he takes note of the Hebrew script of the books and exclaims, "Wow! You can read Rashi!"

Is this not mind-boggling? Do we have an idea of the inestimable value of Torah knowledge? How fortunate we are to be proficient in reading Rashi – and to be able to understand his commentary. Furthermore, we complete the entire Torah annually, while we all study Talmud with its many commentaries, Shulchan Aruch, and Poskim, etc. Do we ever take into consideration our overwhelming good fortune?

Another example of the Torah's purification process (which we do not even begin to appreciate) is related:

Rav Galinsky's brother-in-law, Rav Zalmen Astullin, emigrated to Eretz Yisrael after living for years as a prisoner in the frigid tundra of Siberia. Suffering physically from lack of food and the sub-zero temperatures was not as deprecating as the dearth of spirituality. Every mitzvah he was able to observe was carried out with the greatest mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, although he had no minyan for Shabbos, Yom Tov, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur.

Finally, he was allowed to emigrate to the Holy Land, broken physically, but spiritually intact. The joy of seeing Jews, observant, performing mitzvos in public, was overwhelming.

Rav Galinsky relates a story about taking his brother-in-law to the famous Lederman Shul in Bnei Brak. Rav Galinsky explained that the early (Vasikin) minyan was downstairs, with another minyan starting upstairs about thirty minutes later. As soon as the first minyan concluded their services, another started immediately. The same routine took place upstairs, with this process continuing on through part of the morning.

Rav Astullin said he would remain in shul and take his time davening. When a number of hours had passed and he had not yet come home, Rav Galinsky began to look for him. The first place he searched was the Lederman shul, where he found his brother-in-law running back and forth from one minyan to another.

Asking him what he was doing, his brother-in-law replied, "Can you imagine how fortunate you are? Every minute you have an opportunity to recite Amen, Yehei Shmei Rabba! I just could not bring myself to leave. This is a gold mine!"

Do we realize our gold mine – or are we in too much of a rush to leave early?

I have often said that the last Kaddish is called Kaddish Yasom, the Orphan's Kaddish, because no one is present to answer Amen! - The flip side of Torah erudition which contaminates the pure (so to

speak), is obvious. We satisfy ourselves with learning measured amounts of Torah. - In his Shem Olam, the Chafetz Chaim suggests that the ben Torah who thinks that he has achieved much in Torah should stand opposite a bookcase filled with sefarim, a Shas, a set of Mishnayos, and ask himself how many volumes he has completed and in how many of those does he have unsurpassed clarity?

That should do the trick. On the one hand, we should never underestimate our knowledge of Torah. On the other hand, however, we should never overestimate our knowledge of Torah either!



וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל־הָעֵדָה כִּי גָוַע אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבְכּוּ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל – '***When the entire assembly saw that Aharon had perished, they wept for Aharon thirty days, the entire House of Yisrael***.' (20:29)

Chazal teach that following Aharon HaKohen's passing, all male children were given the name "Aharon" after the holy man whose life was devoted to promoting peace among Jews and marital harmony among husband and wife. Many a family was acutely aware of the role that Aharon played in sustaining their marriage. Out of respect and appreciation -- and probably as a sort of remembrance of the fragility of relationships and how this man saved theirs -- they named their sons Aharon.

The Egyptian exodus took place at a time when our people were physically and spiritually enslaved in the darkness of misery and evil that personified Egypt. Our people have suffered through the darkness of exile for over two thousand years; yet our faith has sustained us; our spirit is alive as a result of our hope that one day, very soon, we will be blessed with the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

Some people, however, as a result of their isolation from the Torah community, have never been imbued with that sense of hope. Nonetheless, we may never ignore the spiritual gravitational pull of the Pintele Yid, Jewish soul, which rests within each and every one

of us. Despite all of the spiritual dross that is heaped upon it, it continues to serve as our GPS for returning to Hashem's embrace.

The story of Yocheved Sheinberger (I think that is her real name) is one such story, which sends a chill up the spine while warming our Jewish hearts.

Yocheved was four months old when the accursed Nazis invaded Holland and rounded up the members of its Jewish population. Among the victims who were immediately sent to the death camps were Yocheved's parents and older brother. They were never heard from again. Yocheved was miraculously saved by her babysitter, who grabbed the infant and took her to a small fishing village in northern Holland.

For the next seven years of her life, Yocheved was raised as a Christian, with no knowledge whatsoever of her birth parents or Jewish heritage. Only at the age of seven did she discover the truth.

After the war, relatives of her parents came to bring her "home". Understandably, with no previous knowledge of Judaism or her relationship with it, she had no desire to leave her adoptive parents whom she had accepted as her own. "These are my parents; I have no other parents," she said.

Her neshamah was working overtime and, when a few years later, her uncle and aunt asked her to spend Shabbos with them, she accepted.

Over the years this relationship blossomed, until, shortly before her bas mitzvah, she declared that she was ready to move to Amsterdam to discover her Jewish roots. This move precipitated her registration in an Orthodox school and, within a short while, Yocheved became observant.

She was still very troubled by one pressing question, which kept gnawing at her continually: Why did her parents name her Yocheved? She was troubled by the name since, after questioning her surviving relatives, no one remembered anyone by the name of Yocheved in

the family's bloodlines. - A Jewish name plays a critical role in a person's life. Thus, at one time or another, everyone wants to know for whom they are named and what kind of person he/she was.

One day, Yocheved was given an assignment for school: Holland's Jewish community on the eve of World War II. She went to the local library to do research in its archive section. Perusing newspapers and other periodicals, she was able to sense from the writings that the Jewish community had surrendered all hope. They sensed their tragic end coming in the near future, and they expressed their feelings in the various letters and articles, which they wrote.

Looking through a collection of letters, she suddenly came across a letter penned by her late parents. At first she thought it was a mistake, but when she saw the signatures, Ita and Hans Sheinberger, her heart began to thump wildly. The date on the letter was two months after the outbreak of World War II.

With sadness and trepidation, Yocheved began to read the last written words by her parents. Indeed, she felt they were speaking to her from the grave. (I use the word "grave" as a metaphor, since most of the kedoshim, martyrs, did not receive a proper burial.) The following are excerpts from her parents' last communication.

"In recent months, we have been privy to sounds of yiush, hopelessness, emanating from the Dutch Jewish community. People have lost their zest for life, to the point that some have totally given up on living. Despair and depression have taken hold of our minds, as people have given up all hope for the future. From the moment that we were blessed with the conception of our future child, friends and strangers have approached us with the question, 'How could you? How dare you bring a child into the darkness that envelopes Jewry? Why would you want a child when you will soon die?'"

"To these people, we have no complaints; indeed, we understand how they feel. We, however, rely on the Midrash that teaches us concerning the courage of Miriam, who, when her parents, Amram

and Yocheved, divorced, said, 'Your decree is worse than that of Pharaoh! He only wants to kill the male population, while you are preventing any child – male or female – from entering the world.' - Hearing these accusatory words, Amram and Yocheved remarried, and from this union came forth our quintessential leader and Rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu.

"In closing, we have decided that if Hashem blesses us with a son, we will name him Amram after the illustrious leader of the Jews in exile who encouraged them to continue populating. If the child will be a girl, we will rightfully name her Yocheved, the mother of Moshe, who was the leader of the nashim tzidkanios, righteous women, of Egypt, who engendered their families with faith in Hashem, despite being enveloped in the darkness of the Egyptian exile".

Yocheved just sat there for a while absorbing the contents of the letter. She now knew the story behind her name and what it represented for her. The tears flowed freely – only this time, they were tears of hope, not sadness.



וְהָיָה כָּל־הַנָּשׁוּךְ וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וָחָי – '***And it will be that anyone who had been bitten will look at it and live***.' (21:8)

The ungrateful slanderers who defamed the manna were treated to a unique form of punishment. They were bitten by serpents whose venom caused their victims to feel that they were burning.

The nachash ha'kadmoni, primeval serpent, had slandered Hashem to Chavah and received a fitting curse that it would no longer experience the enjoyment of tasting food. The punishment was fitting, because the manna which these ingrates had slandered

was multi-flavored; a person could, indeed, experience any flavor that his heart desired. The sinners repented and sought penance for their deed. Moshe Rabbeinu fashioned a copper serpent, which healed a sinner who had been bitten, when he gazed upon it, while he was simultaneously lifting up his eyes Heavenward and subjecting his heart to Heaven.

Rashi adds that the healing process applied not only to those who had been bitten by the fiery serpents, but even those bitten by a dog or donkey would be cured. There was, however, a difference between the two "bites". - One who was bitten by a dog or donkey would suffer harm and gradually deteriorate to the point of death. In contrast, one who was bitten by a serpent died quickly. Likewise, when one who was bitten by a dog or donkey gazed upon the copper serpent, he was immediately healed. One who was bitten by the serpent did not have it so easy. He had to gaze on the copper serpent with extreme devotion, concentrating on his sin and repenting with sincerity.

We wonder why there was such disparity between the two punishments and their cures. They both caused death. Why should the cure not work at the same pace for both?

Horav Shlomo Teichtal, zl, distinguishes between the two forms of sin which precipitated these diverse punishments. One person falls prey to sin as a result of the many challenges he must deal with in this world.

The pursuit of financial stability drives a person to lose sight of his true purpose in this world. He forgets that life is all about achieving spiritual perfection. Instead, in his mind, it is about amassing more money, greater luxury and even greater power. - Rather than settling for less, so that he can devote more to serving Hashem, it becomes all about superlatives: more, bigger and greater physical / material excess. Nonetheless, despite his drive for material abundance, he has not shirked his responsibility to Hashem. He maintains his faith,

perhaps on a more abbreviated level, but he still has it. He believes in reward and punishment and pays respect to Torah and its disseminators. He even learns! It is just that with regard to the pursuit of his livelihood, he tends to become a little lax in his spiritual obligations. Somehow, he has forgotten that it all comes from Hashem and that, on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem decides what he will earn that year.

His sin is that he places spirituality in a far second place, not realizing that, indeed, life is first and foremost about spirituality.

The second sinner has taken the pursuit of the material to a new low. He long ago reneged his belief in Hashem. It is all about excess, luxury and materialism. Spirituality, Torah, and its disseminators have no meaning or value to him. This man is truly smitten with a spiritual illness from which it is difficult to emerge.

The cure is as difficult to tolerate as the sin. The greater and more life threatening the disease, the more serious and painful is the protocol of therapy. Both illnesses/sins will, over time, bring about one's spiritual (and physical) demise. The difference is in how much time.

The first sinner believes that he still has a crutch upon which to rely. He can still turn it around with the proper therapy and return to a life not relegated by spiritual indifference. He believes in tzaddikim, righteous Jews, to whom he will listen ; he will seek their guidance and will stick to their prescription for spiritual health.

The second fellow has severed all ties with the Torah community. He denies the Torah, Divine Providence, Hashem's power over him – even Hashem! This man lives in utter darkness. He will have to look hard and long to perceive Hashem within his life. A tzaddik's blessing will have little effect on him, because, firstly, he will not go or listen to what he is told. Perhaps after he is punched between the eyes, he might wake up and see how far he has descended into the nadir of depravity.

These are the two people represented by the two "bites". The bite of the dog is not as intense. It will, at first, maim and, over time, if it is not addressed, kill. This person has to only "look" at the copper serpent, acknowledge his sin, recognize his distance, and return.

The second person, who was bitten by the serpent, is in mortal danger. He is just about gone. Thus, his repentance requires deep thinking, a long, hard look – which is continually supported and maintained. Only then can he be nursed back to spiritual health.

The cure is concomitant with the disease. Likewise is the duration of the therapy. The further one has strayed, the greater the distance that he must travel to return.



וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל - *'And our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food.'* (21:5)

We do not find the Jews complaining much about the manna during their forty-year trek in the wilderness. Suddenly, at the end of their trip, as they stood geared to enter the Promised Land, they issued their complaints concerning the Heavenly bread. Could they have found no other time to register their discontent concerning the manna? Why now?

The Chiddushei Ha'Rim offers a practical explanation. Satisfaction is often determined by the character of the individual and his concomitant comfort level. Yes, for forty years the Jews ate the manna and it was delicious and satisfying. These, however, were different Jews. They were not the same Jews who had participated in the exodus from Egypt and the Giving of the Torah.

Manna was spiritual food. Only a spiritual person, an individual who is greatly steeped in emunah and bitachon, faith and trust in Hashem, can subsist on spiritual bread. The nation which received the Torah and was content living in the midbar, wilderness, was entirely satisfied with spiritual food. Indeed, Chazal say that the

Torah was given to those who ate the manna, because these individuals exemplified spiritual integrity at its zenith.

Their children, however, members of the generation which was to enter the Holy Land, were a pragmatic people. They were leaving the barren desert to enter a land where work and toil were necessary to produce their food. The lifestyle which they were going to lead was, by its very nature, much less spiritual than that of their parents. For them, a meal consisted of real food, not "virtual" food. They thus asked for, food from the earth, not from the Heavens.

A person's spiritual background and lifestyle determine his core values. Someone who lives a lifestyle which is barren of luxury, in which the spirit takes precedence over the physical, learns to rely completely on the Source of all sustenance: Hashem.

On the other hand, if one finds it difficult to maintain such a way of life because he has distanced himself from the core objectives of a Jew, he will obviously "think" that he needs more, because he does not realize that, at the end of the day, Hashem has given him everything that he has.

Once, a young married scholar spent a long time with Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky zt"l, better known as the Steipler, seeking guidance in his learning. As the young man expressed his thanks and turned to leave, the Steipler said, "Do not forget to help out in the house. I see that you are a true ben Torah and a masmid; but it is important to give proper attention to one's family. When you go home now, ask your wife if she needs your help." - The young man replied, "My wife possesses true yiras Hashem, and she wants with all her heart that I should devote myself to the study of Torah." - "That is her mitzvah," countered the Steipler; "your mitzvah is to help her."

קַח אֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־אֶלְעָזָר בְּנוֹ וְהַעַל אֹתָם הֹר הָהָר – '***Take Aharon and Elazar his son and bring them up to Hor Ha'hor***.' (20:25)

Rashi teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu was instructed to console Aharon, to calm him now that his mortal life was coming to a close. It was a difficult blow. He did, however, achieve the tremendous nachas, satisfaction and pleasure, of seeing his son ascend to the High Priesthood – something which had eluded Moshe.

We derive an important lesson from here. - We must make people feel good – regardless of how painful it might be for us personally. Aharon had the true nachas for which every parent aspires: to see his offspring achieve an enviable spiritual plateau. Moshe, the quintessential leader of Klal Yisrael, the Rabban shel Kol Yisrael, would have done anything to have such nachas. Alas, it did not seem to be happening.

Can we even begin to imagine how much strength of character it took for Moshe to calm Aharon, highlighting the very nachas that he himself did not have?

Imagine that your neighbor's third daughter becomes engaged, while your own daughter is five years older and cannot even get a date. Now it is time to march over to your neighbor's house to share in the mazal tov, while your own insides are torn apart with sadness for your daughter.

This is just one scenario. We all know there are more such gut-wrenching stories. Each one of us, at one time or another, has had the experience.

The Torah teaches us to put our own feelings aside and make our friend feel good. This is what Jews are supposed to do.

The story is told that a Jew once came to **Horav Meir, zl, m'Premishlan**, manifesting a countenance that had pain and anguish written all over it. "Rebbe!" the man began to weep uncontrollably. "I had a small grocery store in which I slaved for over fifty years. I

literally put my life into this store. I spent every waking hour in my precious store. Now, tragedy has struck: my store is gone! It burned to the ground. Fifty years of my life have gone down in ashes. Without my store, for what do I need to live?"

Any of us hearing an adult speak so, would console him – to a point. After all, a store is a means for earning a livelihood. It certainly is not life itself! Yet, we must take into account that to this simple Jew, his store was indeed his life.

The legendary Rav Meir'l Premislaner understood the psyche of the members of his flock. He responded in kind. "Do not worry," the Rebbe began, in an effort to soothe the man's raw emotions. "Hashem only wants what is best for you. You loved the store even more than you cared about yourself. Therefore, you wanted the store to outlive you. Hashem, however, loves you more than He loves your store. Therefore, He wants you to outlive the store."

When we think about this response, it not only demonstrates pure genius on the part of the tzadik, but it also shows how well he understood his people and how deeply he cared for each and every one of them.

Empathy for the "little" man is what determines one's greatness.

וְהַפְשֵׁט אֶת־אַהֲרֹן אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְהִלְבַּשְׁתָּם אֶת־אֶלְעָזָר בְּנוֹ - "***And strip Aharon of his vestments and dress Elazar his son in them***." (20:26)

In the Midrash, Chazal recount a fascinating story about the transfer of Aharon's vestments to Elazar, his son.

It is forbidden to dress the Kohen Gadol in any manner other than the prescribed order: He first dons the undergarments, followed by the outer garments.

In order to dress Elazar properly, Moshe would have had to remove all of Aharon's clothes. What was he to do? Hashem performed a

great miracle for Aharon. Whenever Moshe removed one of Aharon's priestly garments, he found him clothed underneath with a corresponding Heavenly garment, so that Aharon's body was actually never bared.

Another miracle took place during the transfer of the clothing from Aharon to Elazar. As soon as Aharon removed a garment, Elazar immediately donned it. This would have caused Elazar to put everything on in the wrong order, donning the outer clothing prior to the inner clothing. - Once again, a miracle occurred in which everything turned "outside in," and Elazar was dressed properly.

We must endeavor to understand the need for such a miracle. Why could Elazar not wait until all of Aharon's clothes were removed and then don them in proper sequence?

We suggest that it was essential that Aharon see his son clothed in the vestments of Kehunah Gedolah as a lesson to us all. The greatest hope of every Jewish parent is to live to see nachas from his child. Regrettably, a parent's passing is often the stimulus for a change in a child's behavior.

All too often, it is not until the funeral that the children begin to reflect upon their responsibility to compensate their parent for their investment in them. The kaddish should not be the catalyst for remorse and change.

Hashem sought to use Aharon's death as a paradigm for a parent's passing from this world. Aharon saw his son ascend to the Kehunah Gedolah during his last moments on this earth. He saw that his investment had indeed brought a remarkable return. So too, the hope of every parent is that he sees his children reflect the tradition which was transmitted to them.

Greatness does not bring happiness; happiness brings greatness. ~ The Garden of Wisdom

וְהַפְשֵׁט אֶת־אַהֲרֹן אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְהִלְבַּשְׁתָּם אֶת־אֶלְעָזָר בְּנוֹ וְאַהֲרֹן יֵאָסֵף וּמֵת שָׁם - "***And divest Aharon of his garments and enrobe Elazar his son with them, and Aharon shall be gathered up and die there***." (20:6)

The Ramban mentions the Midrash which states that various miracles occurred in connection with these garments. This is obvious from the apparent unfeasibility of Moshe divesting Aharon's garments in their proper order. Were not the outer garments over the inner ones?

Thus Moshe put Aharon upon the rock and removed his priestly garments, and celestial garments clothed themselves upon him underneath. Thus Elazar upon taking over the mantle of priesthood was able to immeaditly put on the garments in their proper order.

What was the urgency for this miracle? Could not Elazar have momentarily waited for Aharon to remove his vestments, and then don them in the simple and correct order?

Rabbi Chaim Elazary Zt"l explains the symbolism of this miracle as based upon the importance of maintaining an unbroken link in the traditional chain from generation to generation.

One of the basic foundations and tenets of our faith is that all our Written Law and Oral Law were transmitted through the generations, handed down from teacher to student, in their entirety. No student may add or subtract one iota from the chain of transmission.

When Hashem commanded Moshe to make priestly vestments so that Aharon should wear them, they became consecrated for this holy purpose. They were an inherent part of the sanctity of the priesthood.

As Aharon was about to depart this world and hand over his charge to the next generation, it was necessary that this transfer be unbroken by any interval whatsovever. Elazar was to don these

vestments from Aharon's body immediately, even if it necessitated the performance of a miracle.

This concept of continuity is poignantly expounded by the Moreshes Moshe. To this day the Bnei Yisroel are called by a name which has reference to nearly five thousand years of history! Only the descendants of Yaakov are cognizant of their lineage to the very beginning of their family tree.

He compares the offspring to the fruit of a tree. Great-grandparents plant the seeds; grandparents are the trees; parents are the branches; and children are the fruits whose growth and development are eagerly and anxiously watched and nurtured.

Fruit trees must be cared for. They require watering, pruning, and sunshine, or their branches will decay, and their fruit be inferior. Sometimes they require special treatment to keep away various insects that would harm and spoil the fruit.

If the children are not nurtured with the water of the wellspring of Torah, if they are not afforded the benefits of the protective influence of mitzvos, the fruit will rot, and they will fall prey to the poisonous influences of their surroundings.

The Torah is a tree of life, if it is held up and supported by study and practice. This responsibility is given to the caretakers of the fruits - the parents, and their surrogates -the Torah educators.

"When drinking a cup of water, learn to love Him for it; when you wear an overcoat in winter, love Him for it; when you enter from the cold street into your warm home, love Him for it; when you put your head on the pillow and your ears folds back comfortably, love Him for it; love Him for restful sleep, pain-free days, for your daily bread, and for all that He gives constantly." ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l





How should one curb his desire and the desire of his family to always "keep up with the Joneses"?

Let him listen to these tapes. Play the tapes of these lectures in your home, to your family. It's of the greatest importance to create an atmosphere of independence in your family - "We don't follow the crowd!" It's important. It's very important. Here's a man who is in dire straits -financially; he's on the verge of bankruptcy. But he has to marry off a child. And it costs him $50,000. He can't help himself because his wife is pressing him, "How can we have less? We'll be ashamed to face our friends. How can we not have this or that?" So this man thinks that he is a prisoner of circumstance. And so he goes even more deeply into debt. He borrows to make an expensive wedding.

What a shoiteh he is! What a fool! Who cares what the relatives will say?! Who cares what the neighbors will say?! You can make a wedding even without a smorgasbord. Oh, of course, it's apikorsus to say such a thing.

Let's say you were a German Jew. German Jews don't make a smorgasbord. And therefore, you have a good model to follow. In every aspect of life, we have to learn to be independent - independent of the foolish pressures from outside the home.

Because constantly we're being pressured to spend money, to keep up with the relatives, and with the friends. Therefore, you're running on a treadmill. You're a prisoner of nothing, of false ideals. You're laboring and spending your substance for something that Hakadosh Baruch Hu never required you to do. That's called wasting your life. You won't get any reward for it, in this world or in the next world. You won't get any reward for keeping up with the so-called Joneses or the Levys.



Should a religious Jew hang a flag out on July 4th?

Let me tell you something, Fifty years ago I wouldn't have spoken about this. I have been speaking more than fifty years in public but I didn't speak about American flags. It wasn't necessary. We don't need it; who needs American flags?

But today I say, if you want to do it today, I say yasher koach. Do you know why? Because all the reshaim are trampling on the flag, and they're trying to desecrate America. You know why they're burning the flag? You know why they're desecrating the flag? Not because they're good goyim trying to improve America; it's because they are reshaim gemurim; the liberals are trying to ruin everything. And when that wicked Supreme Court permitted burning the American flag and saying that the states cannot make a law against it, it was a desecration of America.

After all, America is a good country. We came from countries where we were persecuted, and this country gave us all the rights. I would say we should kiss the ground of America.

I was in Europe for some time; I went to study in the yeshiva in Slobodka. And when I came back, I saw even more that this was a

blessed country; it's a gift from Hashem to us. Shouldn't we appreciate it?! And therefore I say a Jew should hang out the flag. Yes; today, yes. I won't say you're a sinner if you don't, but I think it's a good thing to hang out the flag today. It's not a contradiction to being a frum Jew by any means. We hang out the flag from this shul on the Fourth of July.



When I take my child fishing, is it better to emphasize the idea of tza'ar ba'alei chayim or to emphasize the concept that it is a zechus for the fish to be eaten by an oived Hashem who will use the energy obtained, to serve Hashem?



First of all, who takes children fishing?! I never did! It doesn't say that Yankev Avinu took his children fishing. Recreational fishing is only an imitation of the gentiles. Gentiles go fishing so you're also a Gentile who goes fishing too.

No, it's not right. There are better things than going fishing. You can take a walk with your child and look at the grass. And say to him, "This is your wool winter coat."

"My coat?" he'll say, "What do you mean?"

Yes, the sheep eats grass and turns it into wool. Can you imagine such a machine? You put in grass and it

produces wool for you. - Actually, you are grass. Your mother ate meat which came from animals that grew from eating grass. Yes, a cow is a miracle. You put in grass and it produces meat and milk. All that grass becomes meat on your plate and the milk in your refrigerator. So your mother drank milk and ate meat. And your mother made you.

So if you explain it to your child and explain it again to your child slowly, he begins to hear the nifla'os ha'Boirei. But to go fishing? The whole concept is an imitation of the gentiles. So you'll have to think of a better idea than going fishing.



What is the purpose of a yetzer hora in children if anyhow they will not receive reward or punishment for their deeds?

The answer is that a child benefits greatly by the battle for virtue. It's only because of trial and error, the experience that a child gains by means of trial and error, that's what makes him prepared when he is bar mitzvah to immediately step into the shoes of an adult.

When a child has to fight against jealousy – for example when he sees his mother handling a new baby and this little boy who was there first, he was the only one, the darling of the house, and now feels left out and he feels jealous, so he knows he has to contend with it. Even without being intelligent but because he has to live in that house, he knows he can't run away. - And so to some extent he battles against his yetzer hora and he adjusts.

He has an innate intelligence to battle against any wicked feelings. And by means of that he is flexing his muscles. That, by the way, is

why little children frolic so much; its why little kittens jump around, and little dogs jump around, and little birds jump around; because when they do that they are flexing their muscles and they develop their bodies and so they are prepared for the career of adulthood.

And the same is spiritually. A child is tested by the yetzer hora; he battles against it. Little children have a conscience too; they have chochmah within them and they battle against the yetzer hora. Until finally at bar mitzvah, they are prepared somewhat. - They don't suddenly make an abrupt change; they are prepared for the test because they are already experienced in the milchemes hayetzer.

Supernatural Sensitivity - Rabbi Shlomo Landau



Here are two stories about **The Chofetz Chaim** that should give us enough fuel to make it through the day:-

When the Chofetz Chaim published one of his volumes, somebody walked into the publishing house and saw The Chofetz Chaim holding the newly published sefer in his hand, and he looked devastated.

He went over to him and said, "Rebbi, is everything ok, what's the problem?"

The Chofetz Chaim showed him that in hilchos Rosh Chodesh, the publisher had mistakenly printed one of the pages upside down! This meant that the whole print run had to be re-printed!

The fellow apologised and said, "I feel so bad for you."

"Why do you feel bad for me?"

"Because the sefer was mis-printed and needs re-doing."

"That's not why I'm feeling low and devastated."

"So what's wrong?"

The Chofetz Chaim said, "Think about it for a moment. There is a fellow in this company who is responsible for ensuring that everything is type-set correctly. He is a Jewish fellow, and when the boss sees that they have mis-printed hundreds of volumes – a hugely expensive mistake has been made, he is very likely to lose his job. The guy probably has a family, and children to support, and he is going to end up penniless. He will lose his source of income. I'm devasted for… HIM!"

In the end, The Chofetz Chaim managed to elicit a guarantee from the owner that the typesetter would not lose his job.

What sensitivity for another person!

And here is another incredible story:

One of the ways that The Chofetz Chaim would support himself would be to travel from town to town, and he would sell his seforim – The Mishnah Brurah and others.



The Chofetz Chaim was once traveling to a town with a batch of seforim, and the wagon that he was on was very full. He had his tallis

and tefillin on at the time. The horses were struggling to pull the wagon, particularly uphill.

The Chofetz Chaim offered the driver to lighten the load by getting down from the wagon and walking alongside. The owner was very happy with this arrangement. – No-one even knew that it was the famous and holy Chofetz Chaim. He was dressed like a simple pedlar. And when they saw the old man on the side of the road, the wagon driver decided that he would have some fun. So, he whipped the horses to make them go quicker. The Chofetz Chaim had to run to keep up, but eventually the wagon left him far behind, and made it to the city way before him. – They all had a good laugh at the Chofetz Chaim's expense.

When the Chofetz Chaim eventually reached the city, he found the wagon and retrieved his belongings, and quickly left the city.

Somebody later asked the Chofetz Chaim if he was matzliach in that town, and he replied, "I didn't even go into that town."

It turned out that the Chofetz Chaim was nervous that someone would discover that the 'old man' that they had pranked, was none other then the renowned Chofetz Chaim. The wagon driver would be humiliated that he brought disgrace to a prestigious person.

The Chofetz Chaim said, "I want no part in making any other person feel bad. It wasn't worthwhile to go there and sell my seforim, even though it is normally a good source of income."

The care and sensitivity of the Chofetz Chaim was amazing - That's a gadol.

"If the Nazis sought out every Jew out of hate, we will seek out every last Jew out of love." ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994)



The Siddur Speaks



One Motza'ei Shabbos after Maariv in Eretz Yisroel, the people gathered outside the Shul to say Kiddush Levanah, but the moon was covered by clouds. As the **Baba Sali** was also standing there, everyone turned to see what he would do.

The Baba Sali raised his cane and pointed it to the right, and called on the clouds to move to the right. He then did the same thing to the left. And suddenly, the moon became visible between the clouds!

Later, when the Baba Sali was asked if he was able to control the moon, the Baba Sali replied that what had happened was the result of something that had occurred years earlier when the Baba Sali lived in Lyon, France.

One month, the sky was completely overcast, and on the last night to say Kiddush Levanah, the people informed the Baba Sali that if he wanted to say it, he would have to travel to Marseilles, which was a distance of 230 miles away!

The Baba Sali did exactly that, and rather than giving up on the once-a -month chance to say the Brachah on the new moon, just as one who had no choice, he travelled the distance so he could do the Mitzvah.

The Baba Sali explained that when one is Moser Nefesh for a Mitzvah with self-sacrifice, he receives some type of small control over what is involved with that Mitzvah. He said that it was because of that Mesirus Nefesh years earlier that he was able to direct the clouds away from the moon!

L'Maaseh

A few years ago, in Eretz Yisroel, there was a major traffic jam on an Erev Shabbos, and many people could not make it to their destinations in time for Shabbos.

A nearby Yishuv heard about this and decided to take action. Many families went out to the highway and invited people in for Shabbos. Without any other choice, the people in the traffic were hosted by families in this Yishuv.

That Shabbos night, a father of one of the families being hosted told his kind host that he preferred not to eat after Kiddush and Challah. The host told him that if he was worried about Kashrus, he can show him that everything in his kitchen had top Hechsherim.

The guest replied that this was not the reason.

The host pressed him a little to see why he refused to eat. At first he didn't want to say, but finally, he told him that he was going through a certain difficulty, and he went to see **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l**, about it, and Rav Chaim told him that he needed to do something with Mesiras Nefesh, self-sacrifice.

He said, "I asked Rav Chaim what I should do, and Rav Chaim told me that I should get a generator for my Shabbos electricity. It was Mesiras Nefesh for me since it cost a lot of money to hook up, but this is what Rav Chaim told me to do, so I did it.

This is the second Shabbos of my new Kabalah, so I prefer not to eat from the hot food that is being heated up by your electricity."

The host smiled and responded, "Actually, I'm happy to tell you that we are relatives of the family of the **Chazon Ish**, and we happen to be the only people in this entire Yishuv that has a generator! You can feel comfortable eating here because the food is not being heated by any use of electricity!"

The man was relieved and delighted. The host then asked, "If you don't mind telling me, what is the difficulty you are going through?"

The man said, "I'll tell you. I have an older daughter in Shidduchim. She is not with us for Shabbos because she loves to do Chesed, and this week she is spending Shabbos with a Kallah who is an orphan. Rav Chaim suggested that as a Zechus for her, I should take on a Kabalah that is difficult for me."

The host replied, "That is very interesting, because I have an older son who is in Shidduchim, and he also loves doing Chesed, and he is with the organization Ezer Mitzion for Shabbos, helping them. I wonder if we can maybe make a Shidduch with our children."

After Shabbos the information was exchanged and the son and daughter were set up, and Baruch Hashem, after a just a short time, the couple announced their engagement!



Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Before each summer, the director of a popular girl's camp would call various Rabbonim and ask them for a Brachah for the coming summer, that everything should go smoothly, and that everyone should be safe and happy. - **Rav Gamliel Rabbinowitz, Shlit"a**, is one of these Rabbonim, but for whatever reason, the director couldn't reach him.

A few days after camp had started, Rav Gamliel contacted the camp director and gave his Brachah for the summer. Then, what he did next, showed the care he has for Klal Yisroel. He asked that every girl write her name down on a piece of paper, along with a Kabalah that she would undertake.

He said that he would Daven for each girl, and he would also accept on himself each Kabalah that every girl had undertaken!

The Weekly Vort

● **ולא היה מים לעדה – *There was now water for the assembly*** (20:2).

As a result of Miriam's death, the Jews lost their source of water since the well in the Wilderness existed in Miriam's merit (Rashi, Taanis 9a). The *mann* existed in the merit of Moshe, the *Ananei HaKavod* in the merit of Aharon, and the well of water in the merit of Miriam.

From all three, water is the most crucial. Why was the water granted in the merit of a woman?

R' Moshe Sternbuch explains: Women are the most important factor in the molding of children and in shaping the Jewish home. The mother exercises the most profound influence on a child through her conduct. The spiritual viability of the home is in her hands. She insulates the spirituality of the home from negative winds.

The Torah, which is compared to water (Bava Kamma 17a), is granted to us in the merit of women who follow and are the spiritual heirs of Miriam. They are the ones who imbue the home with sanctity and purity so it can flow with the waters of Torah. (The Torah Treasury)



Be Happy With What You Have While You Have It!

Reuven and Sara Shapiro were brother and sister. Reuven was 11 years old and Sara was 9. Early one morning they were awakened by the sound of their doorbell ringing. They ran to their bedroom window to see who was at the door. A truck driver looked up and told them that he had a delivery for them. Reuven and Sara noticed that his truck had huge pictures of cookies and doughnuts on it. They ran down and opened the door. [When I tell this story at JEP Shabbatons, I always warn the children that in real life, they should never open their door for a stranger].

The driver returned to his truck and brought in boxes and boxes, which he put down in the living room. Reuven and Sara started opening the boxes. They could not believe what they were looking at. There were doughnuts of every flavor along with all varieties of cookies, cakes, and pies. They called all their friends to join them in eating these yummy desserts. They shared it throughout the day.

Early the next morning, they were awakened by the sound of a doorbell ringing. They ran to their bedroom window to see who was at the door. A truck driver looked up and told them that he had a delivery for them. Reuven and Sara noticed that his truck had huge pictures of games and electronics. The driver brought in boxes and boxes, which he put down in the living room. Reuven & Sara opened boxes full of the latest board and electronic games. They called all their friends to play with all the games. Meanwhile, they finished eating the delicious cakes from the day before.

The next morning, the same thing happened. This time the truck driver delivered different flavors of ice cream together with frozen

desserts. The routine repeated itself for two weeks. Each day, Reuven and Sara excitedly opened their front door.



Two weeks later, Reuven had some friends sleeping over at his house. Early the next morning, the doorbell starting ringing. Reuven & Sara heard it and turned over in bed. Reuven's friends went to the window and saw the truck outside. When they told Reuven, he yawned and told them to have the driver put the boxes in the living room. What happened? Why weren't Reuven & Sara excited about the delivery this time? The answer is that they were already used to it coming. They expected it. Therefore, it was no longer special and exciting.

Hashem delivers the greatest gift to us every single morning. Hashem gives us life, by returning our neshama, our soul daily. We should be excited beyond belief, every morning. We should thank Hashem with excitement, each time. But many of us do not. Why? We are used to it. We expect it. It is not new to us, so the excitement has worn off.

The Jewish People, in the desert, had their needs miraculously taken care of. For forty years they received water daily, via a well that traveled with them. Three million people and their animals had their needs taken care of. Yet, not once in those 40 years does the Torah record that they showed appreciation for the miraculous well (Kli Yakar Bamidbar 21:17). Furthermore, the Torah tells us (Bamidbar20:1) that Moshe's sister, Miriam died. The very next pasuk says that the Jewish People no longer had water. Rashi

connects these 2 psukim, teaching us that the well which supplied water for these 40 years was in the merit of Miriam. When Miriam died, the well no longer provided the Jewish People with water.

The Kli Yakar asks why the well stopped supplying water. He answers that it was as a punishment for the Jews' lack of appreciation for Miriam. They did not fully appreciate her for the great person that she was and for the great merit that she had earned. Apparently, the Kli Yakar says, the Jews did not eulogize Miriam properly and her memory was quickly forgotten. [After Moshe and Aharon died, it says that the Jewish People cried. It does not say that after Miriam's death.] As a result, the water stopped flowing. Then the Jewish People realized Miriam's greatness and that they had received this miraculous source of water only in her merit.

When things are going well, we may tend to take these blessings for granted. We may not fully appreciate our good fortune, as we come to expect it. We may not thank Hashem, as we should, for each kindness that He bestows upon us. Sometimes, only after the blessing is taken away, do we fully appreciate it, retroactively.

This trait of not fully appreciating what we have also applies to our relationships with people. Sometimes we do not fully appreciate our loved ones until they are no longer with us.

Be happy with what you have while you still have it! Do not wait until it is gone to appreciate it. Constantly thinking about all the good that Hashem does for you will help you to value it and not take it for granted. Also, do likewise and appreciate your loved ones while they are still with you.

"Hashem wants us to be our best, so He sends a cloud here and there to block the sunlight and clear skies; sunsets would be boring without a few clouds." ~ R' Lazer Brody

English Weekly עץ החיים



There were once two boys born who looked exactly identical. One was a Yid and one was a goy. The goyisheh king snatched both babies and raised them in his palace. At 6 years of age the king decided to return both children to their rightful parents. The children themselves did not know their identity or who their parents were.

Before returning the children to their parents, the king was interested to see if the fathers could figure out which one was their child. The goy came in first and could not figure it out. Next, the Yid was called in and he asked the king to place each child in separate a room. Then he asked the king for grapes. In one bowl, the Yid placed a cluster of grapes and in the other bowl he placed a bunch of **single** grapes, then he went into each room and offered the bowls to the children separately.

One of the children took from the cluster and one took from the singles. The Yid said that the child who took from the cluster must

be his child. The king confirmed that he was correct, but he could not figure out for the life of his how the Yid managed to figure it out with grapes.

The Yid explained with a few pesukem from Chazal. "For example", he said to the king, "It says that when the Jewish People first came down to Egypt it says that there were 70 nefesh, not 70 nefashos. Why? - The answer is because Klal Yisroel are one. Simple as that. We are all part of one unification and therefore even my child who did not even know he was a Jew was naturally pulled to take from the cluster which was a unit connecting all the grapes together." - This is the K'ish Blev Echad of Klal Yisroel.

I heard from moiree v'rebbi **Rav Kalman זצוק״ל** that the **Chofetz Chayim** used to pause before he made the bracha of *shelo asani goy* and think to himself, "Do I really feel 100% happy to be a Yid with not a shmek of feeling of goiyishkeit?"- Only after he confirmed with himself that he did not, did he make the Brocha with simcha.

Rav Yeruchem Levovitzs זצוק״ל quoted in the **ספר – דעת תורה** that if one were to put one act that was hard for a person to do on one side of the scale, and put all the acts done without hardship that every person in the world did from the beginning of creation until this very day on the other side of the scale, the one act will outweigh all those billions and billions of **מעשים**!

"Our friends do not always need to receive advice. Often, they only need an attentive ear to listen to them, with a strong hand to support them, and an open heart to understand them." ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe.



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

וימת אהרן שם בראש ההר וירד משה ואלעזר מן ההר ... (יב-ח)

The sacred gravesite of *Aharon Hakohen* is known to both Arabs and Jews. Indeed, one of the benefits of Israel's peace treaty with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is the ability and accessibility of Jordanian tourist sites, most notably the ancient city of Petra, site of the burial place of *Aharon Hakohen*.

Petra, for a bit of historical perspective, was the capital of the Nabateans about 2000 years ago. A 13th century shrine, built by a Mamluk Sultan to commemorate the death of Aharon, can be seen on top of Mount Aharon in the Sharah range. For seven centuries, Petra's existence was a guarded secret known only to the local Bedouins and Arab tradesmen. Finally, in 1812, a young Swiss explorer heard locals speaking of a "lost city" hidden in the mountains of Wadi Mousa (Valley of Moshe, named after *Moshe Rabbeinu* himself. - The local Arabs believe it to be the place where Moshe hit the rock which gave water to the Jewish people in the desert.)

In order to find the site without arousing local suspicion, the young Swiss disguised himself as a pilgrim seeking to make an offering at the tomb of Aharon, a mission which would provide him a glimpse of the legendary city. He managed to successfully bluff his way through, and the secret of Petra was revealed to the Western world.

One of the most incredible journeys in recent memory to the tomb of *Aharon Hakohen* took place in 1998. A most unusual meeting occurred in Jordan involving the great **Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri *zt"l***, and the sovereign ruler of Jordan, King Hussein. Although King Hussein had been a virulent enemy of the Jews, a man who called upon the destruction of Israel, severely desecrated the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives and whose troops destroyed every single synagogue in the Old City of Jerusalem before 1967, he later softened his stance. Perhaps he was warmed by an incident that occured in 1985 when the king was admitted to the Cleveland Clinic to undergo treatment for a terrible illness.

A group of Jewish activists and Israeli sympathizers decided to make a point. Rather than protest the monarch's anti-Israel policies outside his hotel, they organized a blood drive at the nearby clinic which was to the benefit of the king. Their main purpose was not to protest but rather to show the world that Jews can do good even for an Arab who was a sworn enemy of Israel.

Of course, a little humor wouldn't hurt anyone and so, when the blood drive was complete, one of the organizers asked if he could include a personal note to the King from the members of his group. The wish was granted.

On the note, the man wrote in big bold letters, "Your Excellency, enjoy this gift! This is the only Jewish blood you'll ever get!"

After that, King Hussein displayed a measure of friendship and even signed a peace treaty with the State of Israel. On July 25, 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin and King Hussein appeared at the White House and signed the Washington declaration, which announced the "end of the state of belligerency" between the nations of Israel and Jordan.

In 1998, King Hussein flew Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri to Jordan as his own personal guest. The interaction between the Jordanian leader and the *Chacham* started years earlier when the *Chacham*

sent a message calling upon the King to work towards peace in the world. Many wondered if Rabbeinu Yitzchak was a peace envoy on behalf of the Israeli Government. But before the meeting, Chacham Kaduri's son clarified that his father would not be visiting Amman on an official visit. He stated that the purpose of the trip was only to pray at the gravesite of *Aharon Hakohen*.

An entourage accompanied Chacham Yitzchak on the flight and when they landed in Amman, the capital city of Jordan, he was chauffeured in a vehicle provided by the King. However, as was pre-arranged, the *Chacham*, who by most accounts was 104 years old at the time, did not join the rest of the delegation on a specially prepared car ride up to the mountains. Instead he was flown in a helicopter - piloted by none other than King Hussein himself!

As a sign of respect and deference, the King of Jordan personally flew the great Jewish *Chacham* up to the burial location of Aharon the *Kohen Gadol*, brother of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, buried on *Mount Hor Hahor*, atop the lost city of Petra. - It was there that they both prayed for eternal peace.

Parshah Pearls, (Adapted from Rabeinu Bachye)

● Tents & Houses

אָדָם כִּי יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל -*"When a man dies in a tent* … " (19:14).

The reason that the Torah refers to a residence as a tent, rather than a house, **R. Bachye** explains, is because in the desert, they lived in tents and not in houses. And presumably, it is for the same reason that the Torah does the same thing on a number of other occasions, the best-known of which is probably the Pasuk in Balak (24:5) "Mah tovu oholecho Ya'akov … ".

● A Red Midget

וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־בָּהּ מוּם – *'and they shall take to you a cow that is completely red, that has no blemish* ' (19:2).

The Pasuk is speaking exclusively about a cow whose colour is not completely red (i.e. that has at least two black or other coloured hairs, as Rashi explains). This, says Rabeinu Bachye, comes to preclude a cow that is exceptionally small, which is no less Kasher than a full-size one.

● The Three Things

הַנֹּגֵעַ בְּמֵת לְכֹל נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְטָמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים. יִטְהַר -*"Whoever touches a dead person … he shall be purified through it (the ashes of the Parah Adumah*" [19:11/12]).

From here is the Minhag, says R. Bachye, to wash one's hands after burying a Meis, a ceremony that is reminiscent of that of the ashes of the Parah Adumah. Furthermore, he explains, it is a reminder to avoid rendering oneself Tamei, as the Navi Yechezkel says (36:8) "And I will sprinkle on you pure water and you will become pure … ".

"One washes one's hands. All this hints at the way one is purified from impurity caused by death: (1) water, mixed with (2) dust [ashes of the red heifer] and (3) grass representing the hyssop with which it was sprinkled on the impure one."

On the way out of the cemetery, it is customary to pull out some grass, throw it back over the shoulder, and recite the passage below.

"This is a reminder of **לִתְחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים** - when the dead will come alive at the end of days - that the dead will grow from the barren ground and suddenly peek up like grass." As the Pasuk says in Tehilim (72:16). **פְּרִיוֹ וְיָצִיצוּ מֵעִיר כְּעֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ** – "*And they will sprout from the city like the grass of the field*." For the grass tends to wither at night-time whereas it sprouts in the morning,

As you toss the grass back over your shoulder, say the following verse three times: **ויציצו מעיר כעשב הארץ** Some say this instead: **זכור כי עפר אנחנו**. [See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch **סימן קצט** 199:10 - **דין הקבורה ובית הקברות** . It is also mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch in 376:4 **סימן שעו - מנהג המנחמין, ודין מת שאין לו מנחמים**.]

● The Nine Red Cows

To date, R. Bachye informs us, nine red cows have been brought from the time that Elazar ha'Kohen prepared the first one in the desert, up until the destruction of the second Beis-Hamikdash. They were brought by … Moshe & Ezra. Then Shimon ha'Tzadik & Yochanan Kohen Gadol each brought two. And the last three were brought by Aliuhini, Chanam'el ha'Mitzri and Yishmael ben Fiabi (three Kohanim Gedolim, to be assumed). There will be a tenth one, says the author, which will be brought by Mashi'ach.

It is interesting to note that throughout the four hundred and ten years that the first Beis-Hamikdash stood, they brought only one Parah Adumah, as opposed to eight that were brought during four hundred and twenty years of the second Beis-Hamikdash.

"We daven each day that Hashem should bring Mashiach. Do you think Hashem doesn't want to bring Mashiach? Of course He wants to bring Mashiach! But He wants us to bring Mashiach! He wants us to truly deserve and justify the arrival of Mashiach!" ~ The Kotzker Rebbe

"People question G-d but are certain of themselves. They should rather be certain of G-d and question themselves." ~ R' Yisrael Salanter zt"l.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Understanding Why Not Sharing Torah is So Terrible

זאת חקת התורה - "This is the statute of the Torah" (19:2)

The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (99a) states that a person who studies Torah but neglects to teach it to others has disgraced Hashem's words and broken His commandments, and as a result, his sin will be upon him and he will be completely cut off from the Jewish nation. Although there is a positive mitzvah to teach Torah to others, it is difficult to understand why the failure to do so should be judged so harshly?

Rav Pam suggests that the very fact that he is able to keep his learning to himself without spreading it to others inherently proves that he doesn't appreciate the sweetness of the Torah that he studies. If he appreciated and personally experienced the beauty and depth of the Torah he studied, he would literally be unable to contain it within himself.

The *Chasam Sofer* writes that although Moshe Rabbeinu merited to become the only human who would ever understand the mysteries of the purification of the *porah adumah*, the fact that he wasn't given Divine permission to share it with a single person caused him so much agony to the point that he would have actually preferred that he not be privy to the secret!

Similarly, **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz** was wont to quote something which the *Ketzos HaChoshen* writes in the name of the *Mahar"i Muskato*: if a person will merit the appearance of angels to reveal to him Divine secrets, he will actually have no pleasure from the intrinsic knowledge until he is able to share it with others. Therefore, if a person studies Torah and feels no desire or need to

teach it to others, it can only be because he doesn't appreciate the value and sweetness of that which he studied, which is indeed the ultimate fulfillment of "scorning the word of Hashem." (R' Ozer Alport)

The Danger of Getting Use to What We Have

ותמת שם מרים ותקבר שם ולא היה מים לעדה ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן - "…And Miriam died there, and she was buried there. And there was no water for the assembly, and they gathered together upon Moshe and upon Aharon…" (*Bamidbar* 20:1-2)

The incident of *Mei Meriva* [quarreling over water] follows the death of Miriam. The supply of water from the Well, which had been traveling with the Jews and flowing miraculously all these years, ceased to flow. Rashi, quoting the Gemara in *Taanis* (9a), cites this as proof that during the entire 40 years the Jews spent in the wilderness, the Well was present and flowing for the Jewish people in the merit of Miriam.

The *Kli Yakar* writes that the Well stopped flowing following Miriam's passing, as a punishment for the people not properly eulogizing Miriam at the time of her death. Following the death of Aharon and Moshe, Bnei Yisroel cried. Such a statement does not appear following Miriam's passing. The Torah says that she died and she was buried but there is no mention of any eulogy or mourning.

The *Kli Yakar* states that Miriam died without anyone so much as missing her and it was for this reason that the supply of water was taken away from them. They did not appreciate who Miriam was and the Ribbono Shel Olam therefore said, "I will show you who Miriam was!"

The reason for the departure of the Well was in order that they retroactively recognize that only in her merit did they have water in the wilderness for the past 40 years.

It is strange, perhaps, to hypothesize that Bnei Yisroel did not know that the Well existed in Miriam's merit. But if they did know, then we are left to deal with the problem — why did they NOT demonstrate gratitude and pay her the proper respect at the time of her passing?

We see from here a fundamental lesson of life - people can become accustomed to even the greatest of miracles! The first time they received water from the rock, they were amazed. But when something continues for forty years, day after day, people begin to take it for granted. That is what happened. They took Miriam for granted and they took the miracle for granted.

A time when this hits us the most is normally when we leave a *levayah* [funeral]. Many people leave a *levayah* with the emotion, "I did not fully appreciate this person while he was still alive."

This is what happened with Miriam. The Well was in her merit. But she died and it was "another day at the office" for the rest of the nation. Her righteousness and merit had been taken for granted.

The Torah is telling us this is not right. When such a person dies, it is incumbent – at least retroactively – to try to understand who she was and to give her the tribute she deserved.

"When the Jewish People conduct themselves with compassion and kindness, and judge one another favorably below in this world; Hashem in turn, judges His people favorably, giving them the benefit of the doubt, and bestowing his blessings of kindness and life." ~ R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zt"l.

"Days are scrolls: write on them what you want to be remembered." ~ R' Bahya ibn Pakuda in Chovos HaLevavos.



The Minister's Runaway

Czar nikolai was feared by all. He did whatever he desired, causing everyone to fear him. Nothing stood in his way; he even slaughtered his very close friends for no good reason.

When he stood up to conquer Poland, the Polish empire prepared to defend for themselves. Seeing the armament of the Polish, many of Czar's own soldiers became despondent over their own chances of winning, and thus they seceded from the Czar and built up an army to join with the Polish against the Czar, known as the Bolsheviks.

It was a risky move on their part, yet opposing his view and unwilling to yield to his plan of action, they stood up and sided with the Polish. Understandably, the Czar wouldn't let this rebellion pass easily. He sent his superior soldiers on a mission to find the rebel leader and deal with him personally.

Many attempts to ambush the Bolsheviks leader were made, but he always managed to escape. Eventually, though, the Czar's soldiers finally caught up with him. Seeing them, he knew he had to take drastic measures to free himself from their grasp. If he would be taken into custody and brought in front of the Czar, it would certainly be his end.

He figured out how he would make a swift escape: rousing up his horses, he'd slip out of the wagon and escape unnoticed. While the Czar's soldiers would chase after his empty wagon, he'd be long out of sight, and they would lose their grip of him. And so he did.

Soon after the soldiers passed, he ran to the neighboring town and sought a place to hide. Approaching the first house, he told them his story but they didn't agree to hide him. They knew what would

happen to them were they found to have harbored a rebel of the Czar. After several such denials, finally a Yid welcomed him into his house, served him warm, nutritious meal, and gave him a room to rest.

Concerned that the rebel would be caught, the host suggested that the rebel dress like a davening Yid. He would go to the corner and stand as though he was davening *Shemoneh Esrei*. The Czar's soldiers certainly wouldn't be expecting the rebel leader to disguise as a davening Jew.

It didn't take too much time for the Czar's soldiers to realize his rouse, and they very soon after began searching the neighboring towns to find the rebel. They went door to door but couldn't find him anywhere. When they came to this Yid's house, the rebel went to daven in the corner, and the disguise worked. The Czar's soldiers left the town empty handed.

The next day, when the rebel was ready to leave, he ensured the host that the day would come when he'd "pay him in full" for what he had done. The host didn't pay much attention to his words, thinking, "What's a poor, sought-after man going to offer me in the long run? He doesn't have much! What's he offering someone else?!"

Fast forward some time… After many years of fighting, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Czar and his monarchy, rebuilding the Russian government as they wanted. As the new Premier, one of the first things the rebel leader did was to send letters to those who aided him in his rise to power. Included in the list was the Yid who'd hidden him that night he'd escaped the soldiers.

When this Yid got the letter, he started to tremble. Everyone knew to stay a distance from the Russian rulers, but to ignore the letter wasn't an option.

Scared and frightened, he headed to the palace. When he got there and showed them the invitation the royal doors were rolled open for him, and he was led straight to the inner chamber.

When he was standing face-to-face with the Russian ruler, the latter questioned him, "Do you recognize me?"

Startled and overwhelmed, the Yid responded in the negative.

"You don't recall the day that you invited me and served me that delicious meal—when I was on the run?"

It was then that the Yid remembered the incident. Seeing this, the ruler continued, "At that time, you thought you were saving a so-called regular man, but I was the one leading the war, and now I was chosen to be the ruler. Those who saved the ruler are rewarded with extraordinary things.

"With that kind deed you did, you facilitated in bringing about the fall of the Russian army and my rise to power. The doors to this palace are open to you from now on; whenever you need anything, here is the address!"

The **Chofetz Chaim** would draw an analogy when repeating this story. "There are times when one does a mitzvah and thinks, 'What did I do, after all? It was nothing so great!' But when we come to the Next World, we'll see how each of our actions were helping the king. Every act for the sake of the kingdom is greatly cherished. Doing a mitzvah is favoring the king, i.e. Hashem. Hashem, with his unlimited ability, will surely grant us endless reward for all that we do."

But the story only gets better.

R' Yankele Galinsky would repeat this analogy of the Chofetz Chaim and would continue to tell the rest of the story.

The Yid thanked the ruler profusely, but for many years never took up the new Russian ruler on his offer. Then, in the year 1921, when the *tzaros* started increasing, many *bachurim* of the Novardok Yeshiva tried to flee Russia without the required documents. They unfortunately were caught at the border and were arrested. They were in great danger, as the punishment for trying to escape Russia at that time was death!

They *bachurim* sent an urgent letter to **R' Chaim Ozer**, seeking his guidance, and R' Chaim Ozer immediately sprung to action by sending the man a plea to get him to reach out to the ruler to release them. True to his word, within a short time, the *bachurim* were released.

R' Yankel added with his humor: "The king addressed the man as saving the entire Russia, and I add that he saved Russia and another eighteen boys."

Who was among those boys? **R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky**, known as the Steipler Gaon. Now we see what that Yid's action really accomplished: It saved the future of all Yidden! Our seemingly mondain mitzvos have endless positive outcomes, and by placing a bit of thought to them would allow us to have more meaning to them.

TorahAnytimes Newsletter

The Right Address - Rabbi Chaim Rosenfeld

I remember hearing the following from **Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein *zt"l*** and it hit home above and beyond.

Rav Shimshon Pincus *zt"l* once went fundraising around the country, and obtained the number of the wealthiest man in Toronto—Mr. Paul Reichman *z"l*. After flying to Toronto, he got to work, phoning Mr. Reichman's secretary in the interest of scheduling an appointment with him. But nothing ever turned up. His phone calls weren't returned, forcing him to call back. He planned on being there for only a few days, and to leave without speaking to Mr. Reichman would be an understated huge disappointment. What to do?

Go to Mr. Reichman's house directly.

Boldly, he arrived there one afternoon. Of course, Mr. Reichman was not home at the time, but someone else was. Mrs. Reichman. "How can I help you?" she inquired. "I've been trying to get in touch with

your husband for three days," Rav Pincus said. "But I've been unsuccessful." This wasn't the first time Mrs. Reichman was hearing of a man in need of a check. But she politely probed further. "What brings you here?" Rav Pincus began detailing his community activities and affairs, emphasizing the great need that had brought him there. Mrs. Reichman simply fell in love with everything. Enamored by the magnanimous efforts of Rav Pincus, after several minutes of conversation, she stepped aside.

"Paul," she said, "I have a collector here and I scheduled for you to meet with him at six o'clock today." Now, Mr. Reichman had no choice.

Mr. Reichman wound up sitting with Rav Pincus and writing him a substantially generous check.

When Rav Pincus returned home to Israel, he brought back with him two things: a large check and a fundraising lesson for life. "When you want to get through to the big people—speak to the wife. A husband cannot say no to his wife."

Rav Pincus was once speaking in South Africa, alongside two other rabbinic colleagues. In the midst of their speaking tour, one of the rabbis received a call from back home. "Come home right away. Your mother is in the hospital and her numbers are going down to zero. It doesn't look like she has much time. She may not even be alive in a few hours."

The quandary was troubling. On the one hand, the lengthy travel had been made to inspire Jews to come closer to Hashem, and a sudden trip back home would spell a missed opportunity. At the same time, who knew if the doctor's prediction was accurate. Perhaps it was, and time was of the essence.

What to do and whom to call under such circumstances? It was decided to see if the question could be posed to **Rav Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l*.**

Rav Chaim asked. "Why are they in South Africa?". "Inspiring hundreds of Jews. "If that's the case, then there's nothing to worry about. Tell him that he should remain in South Africa and complete his talks, and that his mother will recover."

next they phoned the hospital to inform the medical staff that he would in fact not be returning at this time. The doctor came on the line. "Oh yeah, great news actually…" said the doctor. "Your mother's numbers went back to normal and she's looking fine."

In reflection and on camera, Rav Pincus wondered how Rav Chaim could be so certain that the rabbi's mother would be alright? Rav Pincus looked into the camera and stated, "Because Rav Chaim is Mrs. G-d. And when Mrs. G-d speaks, G-d listens."

It might sound strange to use the phrase 'Mrs. G-d,' but Rav Pincus says. 'When someone is deeply connected to Hashem, it is akin to a relationship between a husband and wife. They are so intimately intertwined that the wife's input and advice means everything. It doesn't become a question as to whether it will be done. It will.'

Those in a close relationship to Hashem hold a similar place. Hashem heeds their cries, listens to their call, and beckons to their pleas. Avraham Avinu modeled this too. Hashem Himself stated that He would be unable to hide the fact from Avraham that He wanted to destroy Sodom. So he informed Avraham of his plans, to which Avraham lobbied for their salvation. And Hashem listened closely, responding to each of Avraham's requests.

In life, a real, authentic and close relationship to Hashem doesn't just mean you can talk to Hashem. It means you can talk to Him and He listens. -- And such is true for every Jew, no matter who they might be. When you take a step forward to be close to Hashem, in that moment, Hashem steps close to you. And the time for your prayers to be heard skyrockets.

וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־בָּהּ מוּם "...take to you a completely red cow which is without blemish and upon which a yoke has not come." (Numbers 19:2)

A person who considers himself without blemish has clearly not accepted the yoke of Heaven. For if he had accepted the yoke of Heaven to any extent at all, he would know that he inevitably has many faults. ~ R' Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Hurwitz, the "Seer of Lublin"

Aharon's Method of Making Ba'lei Teshuva: Smiles not Stones by Rav Yissochor Frand

The Avos D'Rav Nasson echoes this same theme. When Aharon dies, the pasuk says that the entire House of Israel (implying men and women) mourned. However, when Moshe dies, the pasuk states that the Children of Israel (implying the men only) mourned.

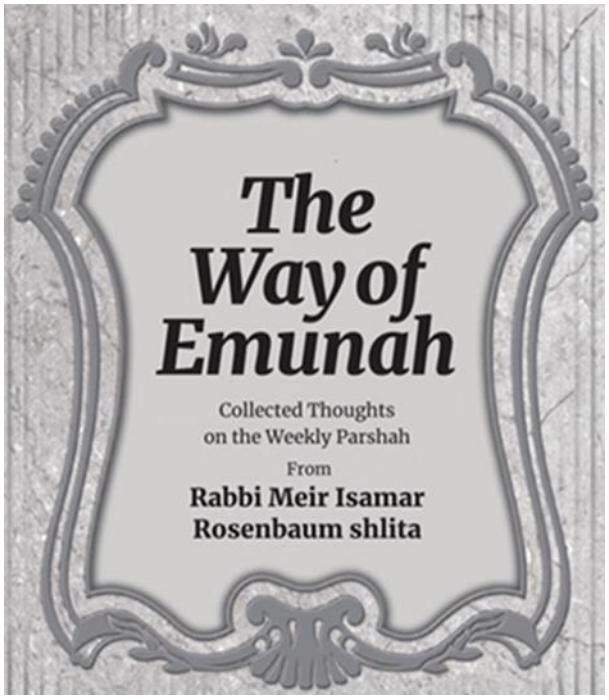
The relationship between Klal Yisroel and Moshe Rabbenu was not the same as between Klal Yisroel and Aharon. Moshe had to give mussar, had to set the people straight, and had to issue uncompromising judgments.

Aharon, however, never criticized. He was a peacemaker who was beloved by everyone. Aharon would greet wicked people with a smile. He did not spit or throw stones. He said "Good Morning." The response of the wicked, often was, "How can I continue to sin, it will distress Aharon?" The Medrash declares that in this way "he caused many people to repent from doing evil." He caused them to repent, not through anger or disgust, but with Sha-lom. That is how he was so successful.

Mr. Harry Wolpert, a long-time supporter of Torah causes in Baltimore, had been a student of **Rabbi Baruch Ber Lebovitz**, the Kaminetzer Rosh Yeshiva. When Mr. Wolpert came to Baltimore in the early 1900s, he repeatedly faced the nisayon of Chillul Shabbos.

Today, we do not need to face the common nisayon of those years — "If you don't come in on Saturday, don't bother coming Monday."

Mr. Wolpert related that he faced this temptation many times when he needed to support his wife and children. What stopped him from succumbing to the temptation? It was the image of his Rebbe, Reb Baruch Ber. Reb Baruch Ber was known as a Rebbe who loved his students. Reb Baruch Ber cherished each student. This love, shown to a student, was what stopped Mr. Wolpert from becoming a Mechalel Shabbos.



Tzadikim Help Those Who Learn Their Torah:

Sefer Peleh Yoeitz writes that the Yerushalmi says that the enjoyment a talmid chochom derives when a devar Torah is said in his name is like when one drinks aged wine.

He goes on to relate that there once was a decree issued to kill all of the Jews in a certain area. At that time, the **Alshich Hakadosh** appeared and saved one man from death because that man had studied his sefer regularly.

Sefer Chasidim writes that if a tzadik explains the words of another tzadik, when he dies the other tzadik comes to greet him with a big smile. He accompanies him and tells the malachim to go easy on him and to stand him before Hashem and say good things about him.

He further writes that if someone says over a devar Torah in a tzadik's name, the tzadik will daven for him and speak well of him.

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

In this week's parsha, after Aaron HaCohen left this world, the entire Klal Yisroel cried because he was **אוהב שלום שלום ורודף**.

Why do we need to ask for peace twice in Kaddish: once in Aramaic **יהא שלמא רבא** and once in Loshon Hakodesh **עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו** ?

Chazal tell us: "Hashem found no vessel that retains blessing for the Jewish People better than peace" (Uktzin 3:12). - We, therefore, need extra tefillos for shalom in Klal Yisroel. - Perhaps that is why there is a "double request" for peace in Kaddish.

By the way, this "double request" should remind us that we ourselves should put in "double effort" to ensure that there is shalom in our homes and communities.

From our Sages

'*The clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean person . . . and he shall be clean at evening. . . . [But] he who sprinkles the water of sprinkling . . . shall be unclean.' (19:19–21)*

The fact that the ashes of the heifer "purify the contaminated and contaminate the pure" carries an important lesson for us: - If your fellow has been infected by impurity and corruption, do not hesitate to get involved and do everything within your power to rehabilitate him. If you are concerned that you may became tainted by your contact with him, remember that the Torah commands the *kohen* to purify his fellow Jew, even though his own level of purity will be diminished in the process. (**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**)

אָז יָשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת עֲלִי בְאֵר עֱנוּ־לָהּ – ***'Then Israel sang this song: Spring up, O well; sing to it.'*** *(21:17)*

Why is Moshe not mentioned here?

Because he owed his punishment to water, and no man praises his executioner.

Why is the name of G-d not mentioned?

This may be illustrated by the case of a governor who made a feast for the king. The king asked: "Will my friend be there?"

"No," he was told.

Said he: "Then I also am not going there."

In the same way, G-d said: "Since Moshe is not mentioned there, I also will not be mentioned there." (**Midrash Rabbah**)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־הָעֵדָה מִדְבַּר־צִן בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם בְּקָדֵשׁ וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם (20:1) '***And the children of Yisrael, the whole congregation, arrived at the wilderness of Tzin in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there***.'

Rashi explained that Miriam also died by a kiss from Hashem's mouth, rather than by the angel of death. But it is not clear why Rashi is explaining this here, or indeed from where he knows this. However, it seems to me that Rashi is coming to explain the words "and Miriam died there", because the word 'there' would seem to be superfluous since it is obvious that she died there.

It is explained in several seforim that someone who has had death decreed upon him, even though he still continues to live here on earth, nevertheless, in the heavenly realm he is already considered dead, as the Maharil writes in his responsa.

I have already written about this at length in several places. But this is only true when someone dies by the angel of death, because then an announcement about the impending death is made before the matter is handed over to the angel of death. But when someone dies by the hand of Hashem no prior announcement is made about him, and thus he is not considered dead until he actually dies.

This is what Rashi is coming to explain – "Miriam died there" and not before, and this can only be if Miriam died with a kiss from Hashem's mouth.



◣ Never Too Late - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־בָּהּ מוּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עֹל ***"...take a completely red cow, without a blemish and that had no yoke laid upon it."*** (19:2)

The Sifsei Tzadik (54) taught that the following is the central lesson of the laws of Parah Adumah: You would have thought that after the cow is burned to ashes, it would be useless. Yet, it is precisely at this point when it has the power to purify those that are tamei. Thousands of Jews can now be elevated from their impurity by these ashes.

This is a lesson for us. If one chas v'shalom has stumbled in their relationship with Hashem and feels that they have nothing left to them spiritually, they must not give up. Remember that there is always a path out from a place of darkness.

◣ It's Only Natural -Maharil

וַיָּרֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַסֶּלַע בְּמַטֵּהוּ פַּעֲמָיִם - "***Then Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice***..." (20:11)

The Torah consistently records for us the faults and transgressions of even the greatest of our ancestors. This is to console us and teach us an important lesson: No matter how high a level a person may be on, he has natural tendencies that try to bring him down. – It is normal to have faults.

◣ Endless Well - Chida

בְּאֵר חָפָרוּהָ שָׂרִים כָּרוּהָ נְדִיבֵי הָעָם - "***The well that princes dug; nobles of the people excavated***..." (21:18)

The Torah has no limit. Even after the great rabbis of generations past taught and wrote so much Torah, there is still room for scholars in future generations to add to knowledge of the Torah.

The princes in the pasuk are the rabbis of past generations, and the nobles are today's scholars. Anyone, in any generation, who adds to the knowledge of Torah becomes a partner to Moshe in "digging" the well of Torah.

"Greatness is a product of challenges, brave attempts, and many mistakes. No one becomes truly righteous without their share of mishaps." ~ Sefas Emes, Reb Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



● The Copper Snake

In *Parshas Chukas* the Am Yisroel finds itself only miles away from their final destination of Eretz Canaan and yet, they begin to travel a long and circuitous route around the nation of Edom whose land Hashem had forbidden them to pass through. And as they turned to begin this rigorous trek, the Torah tells us about an episode of complaining among the people.

They were passing alongside inhabited lands that were living, not in tents, but in real homes, and eating real food instead of *mann*. And for some of the Am Yisroel these sights caused a certain amount of dissatisfaction: וַתִּקְצַר נֶפֶשׁ הָעָם בַּדָּרֶךְ – *"The spirit of the nation became impatient because of the way"* (Chukas 21:4). It wasn't easy traveling the longer than expected journey and so, וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בֵּאלֹקִים וּבְמֹשֶׁה ... וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל – *"The people spoke against Hashem and Moshe... saying: 'Our souls are loathing this light bread.'"* It doesn't mean that the majority were complaining – but there were some who demonstrated some dissatisfaction.

● Pancakes: All You Can Eat

Imagine if *we* were limited in our diet merely to one item, one food, for so long! How long would we remain patient? If your wife gave you

pancakes for breakfast and then when you unwrapped your lunch in the kollel or at the office, another pancake. And when you get home, so now you're already looking forward to something real, some meat and potatoes, something with substance to it. And what does your wife bring out for you? A plate piled high with pancakes again!

And imagine such a thing happening day after day after day – Shabbos too! It wouldn't be a good ending. You would become impatient with pancakes and sooner or later you'd open your big mouth: "My soul is loathing these pancakes already. Why can't we have something else like the neighbor has?" I don't know if you'd be thinking about going back to Mitzrayim but I'm sure you'd be wondering if it's any better in the house next door.

● *A Valid Complaint*

And that's what they said in the *midbar*. לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתֱנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם – "*Why did you take us out of Mitzrayim?!*" "We had homes there! And food too; real food! If only we could be living like the Edomites are living, and eating like the Mitzrim are eating, then we'd be able to succeed in our lives. You expect us to succeed with such a diet, with this לֶחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל?!"

And the *mann* couldn't even compare to those endless pancakes that would cause even a *tzadik* to grow impatient. Because although the *mann* supplied all the necessary nutritional requirements, it was so easily ingested that one didn't have to spend time chewing it. It was לֶחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל – food that was especially "light" and it didn't afford the sensation of eating. And therefore people who ate for pleasure were constantly looking elsewhere.

And just because of that; because the people were thinking about improving their living conditions, so Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent upon them a punishment – a visitation of poisonous snakes. *Nechashim ha'srafim* – fiery serpents were suddenly slithering everywhere, *va'yinashchu es ha'am* – and some of the people were bitten (21:6). Those who complained about their living conditions,

suffered venomous bites and many were in danger of dying and they begged Moshe to save them.

● Raising The Flag of The Serpent

Now, what happened then was something very queer. Because when Moshe Rabeinu turned to Hashem in prayer, at that time Hakodosh Boruch Hu commanded Moshe to make a form of a snake and to put it on a pole. עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל נֵס – *"Make for yourself a form of a poisonous snake and put it on a standard, on a high pole,* וְהָיָה כָּל הַנָּשׁוּךְ וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וָחָי – *and anybody who was bitten by the serpents, let him look at that pole and he will become healed". (Bamidbar 21:8).*

And that's exactly what happened. וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נְחַשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וַיְשִׂמֵהוּ עַל הַנֵּס – *"Moshe Rabeinu made the form of a copper serpent and placed it on a high pole,* וְהָיָה אִם נָשַׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט אֶל נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וָחָי – *and so it was; that if a serpent bit a man, he would stare at the at this copper serpent and live"* (ibid. 21:9).

Now, this story demands an explanation – a good deal of explaining. Because here you have people who merely wanted some better food, they were yearning for a better situation, and what do they get? An attack of poisonous snakes! And how are they saved? By looking at a different snake! By raising up their eyes to a snake on a high pole, that's how they would be healed.

● The Mysterious Pole

Now, just to ascribe to this copper snake some sort of mystical benefit is not following the ways of the Torah. We don't find such things in the Torah. And even if you'll tell me that there was something special, something about this snake that had the power to heal those who looked at it – so why put it on a pole? Anyone who needed could come and look at it. It could be lying in a box and all those who were bitten could come over and take a look; it didn't have to be on a high pole.

And if you'll say there's a benefit of raising your eyes to heaven and praying, then we could understand that – it's true of course. The *mishna* (Rosh Hashana 3:6) says that: כָּל זְמַן שֶׁיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִסְתַּכְּלִין כְּלַפֵּי מַעְלָה, וּמְשַׁעְבְּדִין אֶת לִבָּם לַאֲבִיהֶם שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם -הָיוּ מִתְרַפְּאִין – "*So long as they were looking upwards towards Hashem, and being mishabeid their minds to Him, they would heal.*" But that's not enough of an explanation – because why did they have to raise their eyes to *the serpent?* It could be a tall pole with nothing on top and they'd look at the top of the pole. A pole pointing up to *shomayim*! And on top of the pole, you see the sky and you are reminded about the *Yosheiv ba'shomayim – Hashem, who Sits on High.* That would be a way to be healed! But what's a snake doing on top of the pole?

● Moshe Rabeinu's Shiur on Snakes

Now, when Moshe Rabbeinu fulfilled this commandment of Hashem, he didn't merely place a copper serpent on top of a high pole and retire back to his tent. Had we been there, we would have heard a long *peirush*, a long explanation of the lesson of this נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת. Because there's no doubt that he asked these questions – and he answered them too – and he thereby taught the Torah of the copper snake to the Am Yisroel.

Moshe Rabeinu began his *shiur* to the Am Yisroel from Bereishis, from the *parsha* of the *nachash* in the beginning of the Torah. Everyone knows the story of the downfall of Adam and Chava when they were persuaded by the *nachash* to eat from the *eitz hada'as.* That's something that every child knows; the first time the *nachash* appeared in the Torah, his function was to mislead; to test and to tempt.

That was the function of the snake – to make Adam and Chava feel dissatisfied. They had everything! מִכֹּל עֵץ הַגָּן אָכֹל תֹּאכֵל – "You can eat from the fruits of *all* the trees" (Bereishis 2:16) There was only one thing that they didn't have, the fruit of just one tree. And the job of the *nachash* was make them see only what they couldn't have.

● A Tale of Two Snakes

The snake in *Gan Eden* was an exceptionally cunning being with a great deal of intelligence. It *had* to be a very capable being if it was able to converse with Adam and his wife. And what was the purpose of this cunning snake? It was created by Hashem for the sole purpose of putting Adam and Chava through a trial. Would they withstand the persuasion of a cunning and deceitful being that wanted to convince them that they *didn't* have it all? Would this *nachash* be able to persuade them that they shouldn't be satisfied with what they have?

And it's this function of the *nachash* in *Gan Eden* that is the key to understanding the entire subject of Moshe Rabeinu's copper snake. The *nachash*, we must know, represents a great power that the Creator put into this world – we call it by its Talmudic name, the *Yetzer Hara,* the evil inclination. It's a certain force, a real force that exists in the world to test mankind, to put us through ordeals and to test our virtue.

And it's with this key in our hands, the knowledge that the snake is the *yetzer hara,* that we can unlock the mystery of the two snakes, the *nachash* of *Bereishis* and the *nachash* of Moshe Rabeinu.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

The good news coming from Eretz Yisroel at the moment is the tremendous surge and thirst by yidden from all walks of society, looking to do more mitzvahs and become more attached to Torah and Mitzvos. The *achdus* amongst all yidden is absolutely *moiredik.*

There are numerous stories circulating about what is going on: each could be singled out as a 'Story of the Week', because they are so meaningful and inspiring. The following is just one.

Rabbi Eli Shoshan is an *avreich* in Beitar. His son Yair, is, maybe, not frum. However, unlike many of his friends, he has never blamed his

parents or peers for his struggles. He has a good relationship with his family and shares whatever goes on in his life. When he is home, Yair is respectful of his parents and does his best not to cause them pain.

Before Sukkos, Rabbi Shoshan was chatting with Yair and asked him what his plans were for Yom Tov.

"I'll be home for the first day of Yom Tov, Yair said, "but for Simchas Torah, some friends and I are planning to go to a party in the south."

Rabbi Shoshan begged his son, "Do me a favour, Yair. Please stay with us for Simchas Torah, too."

Yair was hesitant. It was going to be a nature festival, a celebration of peace, with people from all over the world singing, dancing and enjoying themselves together. It wasn't something that happened every day. How could he miss out?

Rabbi Shoshan had an idea.

"Whatever fun things you want to do there, we will find a way for you to do them at home."

Yair was sceptical, but his father persisted. "We have a Chabad *shul* down the block," he said. "On Simchas Torah, *Yidden* from all backgrounds come and enjoy the spirit of the day together, with food, song and dance, and even a few *l'chaims*. Let's go there, and we will sing and dance our hearts out."

Yair thought over this proposal. After all, he did respect his father, and his father rarely asked him to give up an activity that he had planned. "Okay, he said. "But only if I can invite my friend Adam. We were going to go to the festival together, and I don't want to cancel on him."

Rabbi Shoshan agreed. A week later, on Hashana Rabbah afternoon, Yair and Adam showed up at the family home in Beitar, where they

were welcomed with open arms. The family was in the *sukkah* having the afternoon *seudah*, but Rabbi Shoshan asked the young men to shake the *lulav* and *esrog* before they came in to eat.

"You will be doing me a big favour," he said to them. "I try to say *amein* 90 times a day, and I am still missing a few."

So they shook the *lulav* and *esrog* – Adam even made a *shehecheyanu* because it was the first time all Yom Tov that he had done the mitzvah – and took a minute to beat *aravos*, too. Then the washed and joined the family for the *seudah.*

When the meal was over, the family said the ceremonial goodbye to the *sukkah*. They shared a *l'chaim* and danced around the table. The atmosphere was uplifting and joyous. Adam held the *lulav* tightly as he danced.

In the evening, Yair and Adam went to the Chabad *shul.* They sang and danced most of the night and came home in the early hours of the morning, exhausted from the celebration.

Just a few hours later, the Shoshans woke up, along with all of *klal Yisrael,* to the wail of air-raid sirens.

As they scrambled for cover, Amam went to check his phone. A few minutes later, when he came back in the room, his face was turning colours, white to green, and his expression was unreadable. He ran to Rabbi Shashan and hugged him tightly.

The family wondered what had suddenly gotten into Adam. The air-raid sirens were blasting outside, and he was hugging his friend's father, a man he barely knew. Then he began choking, crying and screaming, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

Yair's father's invitation had saved their lives.

The *hakofos* in *shul* that day took on a new meaning. The atmosphere was sombre, but the young men were appreciative of the gift of life that had been handed to them.

The next morning was *Isru Chag*. As he packed up to return home to his own family, Adam asked for one more thing – he wanted to put on *tephillin* before he left. The Shoshans were happy to accommodate him.

As the door closed behind his friend, Yair turned to his father. "Abba," he said, "whatever happens, happens. I am staying home."

And there are so many more boys and girls coming home now, too

We daven for all the hostages, and soldiers, to come home safely, too, **בקרוב ממש**

Good Shabbos



אָז יָשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

The end of this week's Parsha records the moving song which the children of Israel sang out to Hashem in appreciation for the use of the miraculous well which they had access to for the entire 40 years of wandering in the desert.

One might ask, why specifically now, after 40 years, did the Jews see fit to thank Hashem for this wondrous well? Would it not have been appropriate for them to sing the praises of Hashem at any time before this? Furthermore, why do we not see any songs composed for the other miraculous events that occurred in the wilderness such as the Manna and Clouds of Glory?

The Kli Yakar dwells on this point. He begins by asserting that a person only values something when he is in danger of losing that thing. We know that just prior to this song that was sung by the

Jewish people, Miriam had passed away and the well had temporarily ceased to exist. Only later was it reinstated in Moshe's merit and shortly afterward, the Jewish people composed their song.

The Kli Yakar continues by bringing the Gemora in Taanis, (9) which says that there were three wonderful gifts bestowed upon the Jewish people in the wilderness. The first was the miraculous well which came on account of Miriam, the second was the cloud of Glory which came on account of Aharon, and the third was the Manna which came on account of Moshe.

The Gemora goes on to say that when Miriam passed away, the well went away but was returned on the merit of Aharon and Moshe. When Aharon passed away the Clouds of Glory went away, only to come back on Moshe's merit. When Moshe passed away, all three of these precious gifts were gone forever.

The Kli Yakar points out that Miriam's outstanding Chessed during the trying times when Pharaoh had decreed on every male child to be drowned in the Nile and she had saved them from danger by providing them with water at great personal risk was what generated the merit for the Jewish people to receive the miraculous well. Regarding the second miracle mentioned in the Gemorah – the Cloud of Glory which represented the dwelling of God in our midst – this came on account of Aharon who brought the Shecinah down to earth through the service he performed in the Tabernacle. And the third miracle – the manna – came on account of Moshe because the Gemorah says that Torah can only be given to "those who eat manna" and Moshe provided them with the Torah.

The Kli Yakar continues by pointing out that although Miriam's Chessed and Aharon's Avodah were certainly powerful, it seems clear that Moshe's Torah trumped them all by virtue of the fact that they all returned on account of Moshe. We see from here that the Torah itself is all-inclusive and contains every other blessing in it. Similarly Chazal say about the Torah, "Keep tilling it and turning

it over because everything is in it." Not only is all knowledge contained in the Torah, but the spiritual source of all matter on this earth, is contained in the Torah as well.

It is well known that the **Chazon Ish** was consulted by many doctors and patients about complicated medical procedures and was proven time and again to have a knowledge and an understanding vastly superior to that of the top medical personnel of his time. All wisdom comes from the Torah and can be found there and indeed, all creation derives its sustenance from the Torah.

The **Ohr Hachayim** on this week's Parsha explains that the song which the children of Israel sang in appreciation for the well was in fact a song about the Torah which is represented by water.

However, we could ask the same question on this Ohr Hachayim that we did on the Kli Yakar. Why only now did the Jews sing the praise of the Torah and not 40 years earlier at Har Sinai? The simple answer offered by many of the Meforshim is that we know that a person doesn't fully understand and appreciate his Rebbe until 40 years later. Similarly, the Jews were only in a position to fully appreciate the Torah and the one who taught it to them 40 years after its delivery and could only now sing its praise.

But perhaps we could answer in a slightly different fashion incorporating the Kli Yakar's explanation into the Ohr Hachayim. Only now when the Jews got the Well back in the merit of Moshe, were they able to comprehend how great the Torah truly was! When the Jews saw undeniably that none of the Giants (Miriam and Aharon) were alive, and the great well still came back to them on account of Moshe who was the pillar of Torah, were they able to grasp the true magnitude of the Torah and this is what generated the desire in them to open up in song which praised the Torah.

May Hashem help us to rejoice in our Avodah!

עבודה לשמה

This week's Parsha tells us about the fateful events which led up to Moshe Rabenu's sin of hitting the rock. The Jews complained to Moshe and Aharon about the lack of water in the desert and Moshe asked Hashem what to do. Hashem told Moshe to speak to the rock and ask it to produce water. When Moshe tried this and was not successful, he went ahead and hit the rock and for this minor infraction, was prohibited from entering into the land of Israel.

All of the Meforshim on the Torah attempt to pinpoint what exactly was the mistake that Moshe Rabenu made, and they all offer interesting possibilities. I would like to focus on the proposal of the "Madregas Ha'adam", **the Sabba from Novordok**.

The Sabba explains (based on the Midrash) that when Moshe was commanded to produce water from the rock, the Jews were not impressed with this commandment. They said that Moshe was a well-trained shepherd, and was adept at finding water even in desert wastelands. They claimed to Moshe that they should be allowed to pick which rock would be the one to produce the water. So Moshe was caught in a bit of a pickle. On the one hand, he knew that if he were to listen to the Jewish people, Hashem could certainly allow water to come forth from whichever rock He wanted and that way, Hashem's name would be lauded in the world. On the other hand, to produce this great Kidush Hashem, it would mean ignoring a direct commandment from Hashem. So the Sabba explains that Moshe erred and chose to try to sanctify Hashem's name by speaking to a different rock than he was commanded.

However, the Sabba presses further. Where exactly was the mistake? If all Moshe wanted to do was glorify Hashem's name on this earth, how could this possibly be wrong?

The Sabba explains that Moshe erred in his calculation, as is evidenced clearly by the results. He proves this by invoking the

words of the **Yalkut Shimoni** which says that when Moshe hit the rock, all the rocks in the desert began to spring forth water.

R' Chaim Shmuelevits argues emphatically on the Sabba's position and explains that Moshe Rabenu's mistake was not in miscalculating as the Sabba asserted, rather it was in the fact that Moshe had any calculations at all!

When Hashem commands you to do something, you do not think whether or not the result will be favorable. You perform! A person's reaction to a commandment from Hashem should be like that of a servant to his master. He performs his master's will without question or thought. This was Moshe's mistake.

R' Chaim goes on to explain that this is every Jew's primary focus – to reach the level where everything he does on a day-to-day basis is solely because Hashem commanded him to do so.

Similarly, the **Ohr Hachaim** explains that this is really the theme of this week's Parsha. The Parsha opens up, "These are the statutes of the Torah", and then goes on to talk about the laws of the Red Heifer. It should have said, "These are the laws of purity and impurity".

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the Torah is teaching us with this verse that it is not only the laws of the Red Heifer which we don't understand, but rather the entire Torah which we don't understand and when we perform a Mitzvah for this reason – solely because Hashem said so – it is as if we performed the entire Torah. That's why the verse says, "These are the statutes of the Torah".

May we merit to be true servants of Hashem and perform His will Lishma!

'Emunah is not a destination, it is a journey.' ~The Chofetz Chaim

פרשת חקת ומצוות אנשים מלומדה

In this week's Parsha, the children of Israel lodge yet another complaint with Moshe about their repetitive and dull food supply. They complained that they had no bread and no water and only had the Manna for sustenance.

Let us try to understand what exactly they were referring to. The Manna was probably the most amazing food ever to grace this earth. The angels themselves partake of the Manna on a daily basis. It was lean and tasty, and it was so efficient, that it was completely absorbed by the body and produced no waist! The Manna was so incredible that it would adopt the taste of whatever the person ingesting it was in the mood for. Bearing all this in mind, how could the Jews have complained about such a remarkable method of sustenance?

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz gives us a deep insight into the human psyche which may help us understand the Jews' reaction. R' Chaim explains that there is a particular bug inside of a person's mind which causes him to severely dislike routine. When something is done for the first time, it carries with it an aura of mystique which the human mind finds appealing. But as the days turn into years, and the years into decades, that mystique fades away, and is replaced with routine and habit.

As the years pass on, this sensation of routine can slowly erode at a person's consciousness, until if he is not careful, he can become so fed up with that previously glorious activity, that the mere sight of anything that has to do with it, can send him running in the other direction.

Many of us, when we first began to keep the Mitzvos, we did it out of a great sense of inner joy at the opportunity to come close to our creator, but after a while of this repetitive service, we found ourselves falling into this trap of monotony. I would like to try to give some advice on how to avoid this pitfall.

One should know that habit is not always a bad thing. We pray every day in the morning blessings, "May it be your will Hashem, that you accustom us to Your Torah". Furthermore, on the Mishnah in Avos, "It all goes according to the majority of a person's actions" the **Rambam** says that it is better to give a little charity every day then to give a lot of charity at one time. This is because we accustom ourselves to Mitzvah observance, thereby making it easier to keep the Torah in the future and habituating ourselves to its demands. Nonetheless, there is a very real danger in this type of service and which we must find ways to avoid.

R' Chaim offers two very practical pieces of advice on avoiding our service from becoming dull and droning on. Firstly, he says that a person must take on new activities which will in turn awaken his heart and excite him in his service. For example, a person could take on a new song to sing on Shabbos, and this may refresh his entire Shabbos observance. Or one could take on a new particular intent to have during his Tefilah.

Chazal say that one should change his requests every day in order that his prayer not become a wrote activity, and this new intent can spur an entirely refreshed attitude toward his whole prayer. Or a person could take on in his learning a new commentary which contains original and insightful ideas, and learn it with depth and gusto, and really enjoy that time. This type of attitude will not only cause that time of day to be invigorating and energizing but will cause new vitality to spread to his entire service and will breathe new life into everything that he does.

May we always merit to serve Hashem with great enthusiasm!

"A strong home is built with gentle words." Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation



The Cheapest Renovations

Over the past several decades, the face of Tel Aviv has changed drastically. What used to be a vibrant, observant home for many Chassidic dynasties is now more or less devoid of Torah community life. **Reb Dov Kook** would go from time to time to a *bais medrash* there to learn without disturbance. The *gabbai* of the shul would make a special trip to unlock the doors so that the prestigious Rav could learn uninterrupted.

On one such visit, the *gabbai* released a groan. "Look at this *bizayon* (embarrassment). The shul is not maintained the way it should be. It looks like no one has touched it in 100 years. It used to be flourishing and well-maintained; now it sits empty and disheveled. What a *bizayon*! With only 10 elderly men attending on Shabbos, we can't cover the cost of renovating the shul, but something has to be done. What should we do, *kavod haRav*?"

The Rav stretched his hand deep into his pocket and shelled out 40 shekels. "This is for renovations."

The *gabbai* thought to himself, "What's 40 shekels going to help? Can I hire a contractor with such little money? Would an interior designer even give an estimate?"

The only thing the *gabbai* was able to buy with the money was a can of paint. A fresh coat of paint would be something, and at the same time would work within his budget. So, he went to the hardware store, bought a beige-color paint, and headed back to the shul to start his "job."

While he was painting the front door, a latest-model Tesla pulled up, and the driver asked what he was doing.

The *gabbai* thought that the man looked familiar, but he wasn't sure exactly from where. He responded that he was starting to paint.

"That I know," responded the man. "Why are you doing this?"

The *gabbai* explained to the man how Reb Kook had visited the shul and had donated 40 shekels toward the renovations, and how his donation covered just a can of paint. "We've reached the point where we can no longer daven like this. The shul is dilapidated, and it's disrespectful for Hashem's house to look like this."

The man parked his car and made his way into the shul. Looking around, he told the *gabbai* that his father had davened there till his very last day, and that he'd like to rebuild the shul in his honor. "I want the place that my father davened in to glitter once again — that it should be fit for a king."

The man took out his checkbook and signed off a check for 800,000 shekels — a sum that covered much more than just the paint! With that check, the shul was able to cover most of the reconstruction costs, and the *bais medrash* once again sparkled the way it should.

After doing what he could do, Hashem arranged that the needed money would arrive from Above in an extraordinary way. When we put in what we can, then Hashem puts in the rest, and we can be zocheh to outstanding siyata d'Shmaya.

Word By Word

Due to his diabetes, **Reb Yitzchok Bensoussan** needed a minor procedure to clean the stent in his foot. It was to be a routine procedure; nothing too alarming. During this particular procedure, though, the doctor hit an artery and brought upon uncontrollable bleeding. A procedure that should've required only local anesthesia instantly changed to needing general anesthesia. The surgeons quickly obtained the necessary medication, put it under his tongue, and on the spot began to get the bleeding under control.

After the operation concluded and the anesthesia wore off, they informed Reb Yitzchok that he had suffered a minor stroke during the procedure. As a result, his vision had been affected to the point that he couldn't see anything other than what was right in front of his eyes, and that even that was only fuzzy and barely discernible.

Reb Yitzchok was very distraught. He had been waiting many years for the day that he would be able to retire and spend his last days in Kollel, and now, during his first "Kollel years," his vision had been taken from him.

On the first day of the new *z'man*, at 2 PM, his son, Reb Duvi, phoned his mother. "Probably Abba was very disturbed that he couldn't attend Kollel on the very first day of the *z'man*." His mother replied, "Don't you know your father? He's a fighter."

"A fighter? How does that help? If he can't see, he can't see. Fighting won't return his vision!"

"Well, let me tell you. After we finished breakfast this morning, I saw him feeling his way to the front closet and putting on his jacket. I asked him, 'Are you kidding? How are you going to learn like this?'

"He responded, 'Don't worry. Hashem understands. Even if I just sit there not understanding anything, He'll understand.'

"I thought to myself, 'If he's so determined, I'm not going to withhold him.'" Then she handed the phone to Reb Yitzchok.

"Shalom Aleichem," Reb Yitzchok addressed his son.

Reb Duvi was amazed. "Abba, with all due respect, what were you thinking when you went to Kollel today? You didn't know that you couldn't see? Why did you go?"

"Dear son, let me tell you what happened: When I arrived at Kollel, my chavrusa brought me a Gemara. So, there I was, sitting in front of the first page of *Mesechta Bava Kamma*, unable to see anything. Not words, not letters, not even the page layout — nothing. I turned

to Hashem and pleaded: 'Please let me see the page. I endured this trip so I can learn Your Torah. At least let me see the page.' Shortly after, the border around the first word of the Mishna became noticeable. I was delighted. I can see!

"Then I pleaded further: 'Hashem, please allow me to see the words. I didn't just come for the page; I came for the words.' Just then, the word *Arbaah* popped up (the first word of the *mesechta*). I was so happy. I saw a word! But I wasn't satisfied with just that. I insisted on more. 'Hashem, I want to see more!' After some fervent tears, I suddenly began seeing the word *Avos* as well.

"I was glad about that too, but the remaining words were still covered by a ton of bricks. I continued davening, and after one minute, the word *Nezikin* glowed into my eyes. I was staggered. I got through the opening of the Mishna! How exciting!

"I thanked Hashem from the depth of my heart, but I wasn't going to settle with just that. While thanking Him for what I'd received, I was asking for more. And as I was asking, so I was getting. The more I asked, the more I got. And so it continued. After every word that I went through, I asked for more and more until no word was left buried. The cycle continued until I'd plowed through *every word* of the Mishna.

"By the culmination of *seder*, I'd finished the first *amud* of the *mesechta*: Gemara, *Rashi*, and *Tosafos*. That filled me with unparalleled satisfaction. That's the story in a nutshell.

Ever since, he was able to learn smoothly like his most inner desire. Everything he had up until that day was a 'freebie' from Hashem, and Hashem wanted to see if he'd fight for it, as well. Seeing his perseverance, Hashem enlightened his vision, and he was able to learn many more pages of Gemara."



102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - The Mysterious Trip

The following story was recounted by Rabbi Goel Elkarif, a popular speaker for the Hidabroot kiruv organization.

One night my uncle attended a wedding in Netivot. The wedding was lively and joyful, and the dancing went on and on. He finally left the hall at 12:15 to drive back to Bnei Brak, where he lived. As he pulled out, he saw an avreich standing on the side the road and waving his arms frantically. My uncle stopped and the avreich came over and asked, "By any chance, are you driving to Bnei Brak?"

"Yes, I'm on my way home."

The avreich's face lit up. "Can I get a ride?"

"With pleasure."

The avreich settled himself in the passenger seat, and a thick silence fell between them. My uncle found himself thinking, 'What kind of person hitches a ride to Bnei Brak at this hour?' He felt he simply had to know.

"If you don't mind my asking, why are you going to Bnei Brak so late at night?"

His passenger remained silent for a few moments, giving the impression that he was debating how to answer. "Because you're doing me such a big favor, I'll tell you the truth," he finally said. "I live in Netivot, and for years now I've been very scrupulous about davening Ma'ariv with a minyan. Even if I'm tired and forgot to daven early, I won't give in to the yetzer hara, and I'll go searching for a minyan.

"I wasn't paying attention to the time tonight, and the last minyan in my neighborhood is over. I knew there was no chance I'd find another minyan in Netivot, so I turned to Hashem, and said simply: Ribono shel Olam, You know I've always done everything to avoid

missing a minyan for Ma'ariv. Please, Hashem, I don't want to daven without a minyan tonight. I am going out to the street, and I'm begging You to send a car heading to Bnei Brak, where I'll be able to find a minyan in the Itzkowitz shul.

"As soon as I finished my tefillah, you came by. You're the first driver to stop, and you're driving to Bnei Brak. I'm so thankful to Hashem. I feel that He saw how much I wanted to daven Ma'ariv with a minyan, and He helped me."

My uncle was amazed. Was this man really going to travel all the way to Bnei Brak just to daven Ma'ariv with a minyan? He'd never heard of such a thing.

"Listen," he said, "I don't live near Itzkowitz, but after such a story, I'll take you there. But how are you planning to get home? How will you get back to Netivot after davening?"

"I thought about that," the avreich answered, "and I decided that if I don't have a way to get home, I'll go to Ponevezh and sit and learn there till morning, when I'll be able to catch a bus home."

The two soon arrived in Bnei Brak. As my uncle let off the avreich in front of Itzkowitz, he said to him, "Listen, I'm very curious to know the end of the story. Please give me your phone number, and I'll call you tomorrow morning, and you'll tell me what happened."

The avreich agreed and gave him his phone number. Now listen to the conclusion of the story.

The avreich entered Itzkowitz at about one thirty in the morning, and he saw that the men there were seeking a tenth man for the minyan. When he joined them, they started davening, and when he turned to leave, he heard someone in a car outside shout to his friend still in the shul, "Yossi, stop chatting. We have to get to Netivot! You're wasting time!"

The avreich couldn't believe what he was hearing. He dashed over to the driver and asked him if he could get a ride. The driver happily

agreed, and the avreich made it home and was able to sleep in his own bed that night, content in the knowledge that he hadn't missed davening Ma'ariv with a minyan.

This is a story about ordinary people just like us. We see that when a person makes sacrifices to fulfil a mitzvah properly, Hashem sends him special assistance from Heaven.

The Airline Passenger Named After Rav Shach zt"l

It was a story related recently by one of Lakewood's top Rabbonim and Poskim. An Avreich was on an airplane and there was one seat left. The passenger next to him was an African American individual who seemed to have an interest in the Sefer that the Avreich was learning.

The Avreich was curious about his fellow passenger's interest and introduced himself. The man said his name was "Shach." Eventually the Avreich asked him about his interest in his Sefer. The man answered that the words in his Sefer were the same words that appeared on the tattoo on his arm.

The Avreich wanted to see it. Sure enough, the man showed him his tattoo which said the words, "Zos Chukas HaTorah."

Bewildered, the Avreich asked what the reason was that he had the tattoo. The man answered that he did not know and that his father had put it on him. The Avreich asked for his father's number.

Later, when he got off the plane the Avreich called the father. He told him that he met a man named, "Shach" with a strange tattoo.

The father said, I will tell you the story.

"I was a talmid of Rav Shach and I was having parnassah problems. I asked reshus to leave learning and go to work. I received his permission. Eventually, I was working in an office and there was a cleaning lady that came at night. I asked Rav Shach whether I had

to be concerned for Yichud. He said that I do. I rationalized that it was remote and that I as married with children. I didn't listen to Rav Shach. Eventually, the worst happened. I named the child after my Rebbe – who I didn't listen to. He was born on Parshas Chukas."

The Rav told the story to warn others that we should all be very meticulous in hilchos Yichud.



Miracle of Recent History

Chevrah Hatzolah played a pivotal role in the rescue operations at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The very first ambulance to arrive at the Twin Towers following the first plane crash was a Hatzolah ambulance. By the time the second airplane crashed into the second tower, there were two dozen Hatzolah ambulances, including their communications and command center trailer, and 200 EMTs, paramedics, and doctors from Hatzolah on the scene.

By the time the buildings collapsed, ambulances and emergency medical personnel from all the branches of Hatzolah throughout the five boroughs of the city of New York and as far away as Rockland County had arrived on the scene. During the first hour of the disaster, over 123 patients were transported to area hospitals by Hatzolah ambulances.

At the south end of the Twin Towers, Hatzolah was the dominant ambulance service covering the disaster scene. They transported numerous victims to safety, including police officers and fire fighters.

When the buildings collapsed, about 3,000 people were killed. In addition to the people inside the buildings themselves, everyone in

the vicinity was endangered by the huge pieces of metal and glass falling from great heights. People raced for cover. Many were killed by falling debris or died from suffocation by the dust and smoke.



The Hatzolah dispatcher was advised by two-way radio that many Hatzolah members had been trapped under the debris, and he began calling each member by name over the radio. For the 850 members and their wives, it was an extremely long hour as they waited to hear responses from their colleagues and husbands. At the end, although there were injuries, every single Hatzolah member was accounted for and confirmed to be alive.

It was clear to everyone that hundreds of miracles must have taken place for all of the members of Hatzolah to be saved. They all attributed their miraculous salvation to the zechus of being part of an organization that engages in constant lifesaving chessed.

Rabbi Mechel Handler, the executive director of Chevrah Hatzolah, was one of the people who came close to death as he struggled to breathe and race for cover in the midst of the falling debris. When Rabbi Hendler later met Chief Robert McCracken of FDNY/NYCEMS, the two men immediately hugged each other. After hearing that all of the Hatzolah members had survived, Chief McCracken said with conviction, "It is obvious that your G-d has miraculously saved all of you" (Even in the Darkest Moments, by Zeev Breier).

Working on our Middos

Rav Dovid Nakash shared a story.

When Rav Elyashiv, zt"l, the Gadol HaDor, had a heart attack, one of the first men at the scene was able to revive him, and with Hashem's help, Rav Elyashiv went on to recuperate, and live for many more years.

Imagine the Zechus, the special merit of saving the Gadol HaDor. The greatness of Rav Elyashiv, whose Torah learning held up the world, and whose guidance was sought the world over, cannot be measured. The value is incomprehensible.

Hearing how this individual was the first to be at Rav Elyashiv's side and helped resuscitate him, a philanthropist considered an idea. Could he possibly purchase this man's Zechus? Perhaps, for a hefty sum, he would be willing to sell his share of the reward in Olam Haba.

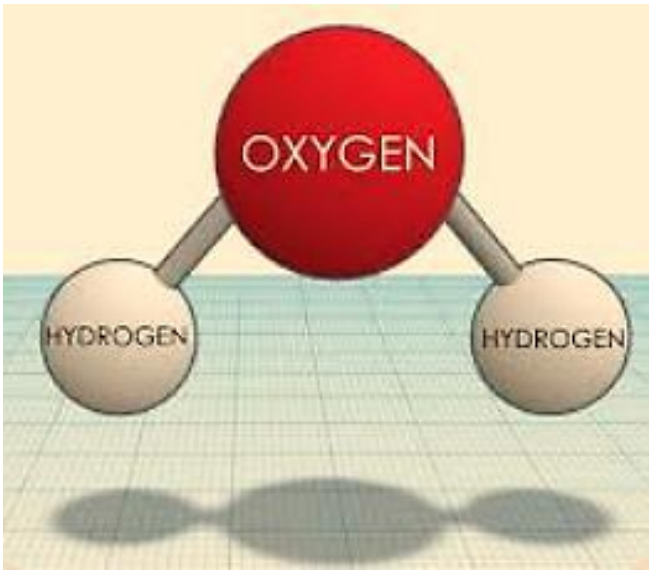
This philanthropist sent a letter and a check for $180 million to this man. He explained that if he were to cash the check, it is on the understanding that the S'char for saving Rav Elyashiv would be purchased by this philanthropist, and would forever be his. - It was a seemingly exorbitant sum to pay for a Mitzvah, for something that cannot be touched or held. Many people may actually jump at the opportunity to sell their Mitzvah for $180 million. It would seem to be a simple question with a simple answer. One could reason that if they sell a Mitzvah, more Mitzvos could be done in the future, and many good deeds could result from earning $180 million! Imagine how much Tzedakah could be donated to Shuls, how many people's lives could be saved, and how many other Mitzvos could be performed from those funds!

Faced with this question, the man went to none other than Rav Elyashiv himself. Laying out the details of the scenario, Rav Elyashiv responded, "**We do not sell Mitzvos**." Rav Elyashiv continued to repeat this line over and over. We do not sell Mitzvos.

But what about the $180 million? We may look at a Mitzvah as simply something good to do, yet, such a perspective lacks a true appreciation for what is real and what is fake. Money, no matter the amount, even $180 million, is temporary. A Mitzvah, no matter how big or small, is permanent. Why would one ever sell something that is permanent for something that is temporary?

Never underestimate the value of any Mitzvah!

Molecules & Mysticism: The Secret Life of Water



The chemical formula for water is H_2O—meaning it's composed of two hydrogen atoms bonded with one oxygen atom. Each hydrogen atom has an atomic weight of approximately 1, while oxygen weighs in at about 16. So together, water's atomic structure carries a ratio of 2 to 16, or simplified, 1 to 8.

Now here's where it gets fascinating.

In the Hebrew language, the word for water is **מים**. It contains two *mems* (**מ**) and one *yud* (**י**). The gematria of **י** is 10 while each **מ** is 40—adding up to 10 and 80, respectively. That too gives us a 1 to 8 ratio. The Torah's word for water reflects its chemical structure!

And now, one final, beautiful connection.

We know that water is the source of all life. Now, the Hebrew word for life is **חי**. This has a gematria of 18. If you total the atomic weights of water—1 (hydrogen) + 1 (hydrogen) + 16 (oxygen)—you arrive at 18!

Parshah Pearls Adapted from the Chofetz Chayim

The Lid's Off

וְכֹל כְּלִי פָּתוּחַ אֲשֶׁר אֵין צָמִיד פָּתִיל עָלָיו טָמֵא הוּא - ***"And any open vessel whose lid is not firmly closed, is impure***" (19:15).

The Chofetz Chayim would interpret the open vessel to refer to the human mouth. Someone whose mouth is constantly open, who does not keep the lid firmly closed – meaning that he fails to adopt the various fences and safeguards against loshon ho'ra, is impure (due to the loshon ho'ra that he will inevitably speak).



Say It Out Loud!

There is a big dispute amongst the great Reshonim as to what the sin of Moshe Rabbeinu was. Rashi learns that the sin was that Moshe hit the stone.

The Rambam brings from **Rabainu Chananel** that the sin was, that Moshe said **הֲמִן הַסֶּלַע הַזֶּה נוֹצִיא לָכֶם מָיִם** – From this rock **WE** will bring you water. Moshe *should have* added Hashem into that statement. Moshe should have said **הֲמִן הַסֶּלַע הַזֶּה יוֹצִיא ה' לָכֶם מָיִם**. This was THE chet which caused Moshe to be denied entry into Eretz Yisroel! Absolutely incredible!

The meforshem ask {See **אור החיים הקדוש** } why is this *bichlal* a sin? Was it not known to all again and again, over and over that every

single act that Moshe did was purely from Hashem Yisborach!? Why in the world was this a taina on Moshe for not verbalizing this?

And the answer is that we see from here how important it is to SPEAK OUT the words that it is coming from Hashem! We see from here that it is not enough that people know that it is from Hashem – one must **verbalize** the words! This idea is so so chamur, that Moshe was punished that he would not be able to enter Eretz Yisroel – the place of Hashem. When mentioning Hashem's name one is mekadesh Hashem's name in the world.

מו״ר Rav Kalmen זצוק״ל said over that he once asked one of his Rabbeim if it was really necessary to write **בס״ד** on the corner of the paper. And his Rebbe answered him, "Of course you should, don't we need it?" Rav Kalmen used to say don't close "**בס״ד**" into a tiny box in the corner of the page… Make it clear and vivid – WE NEED HASHEM'S SIYUA!

At times people would ask the Rosh Yeshiva - **Harav Hagaon R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg זצ״ל** if he needed anything. The Rosh Yeshiva would answer wittingly "**סייעתא דשמיא**, we need **סייעתא דשמיא**." Why is this? -

The explanation is that without **סייעתא דשמיא**, we have nothing.

What was the difference of how Yaakov would talk and how Eisav would talk? The answer is Yaakov **MENTIONED** Hashem's Name in all his Hatzlacha and Eisav did not! It is an amazing thing, and we must appreciate and internalize this yesod gadol venoira mamesh!

"There are many paths to serve Hashem, for every soul is unique. One Jew serves Hashem through study and another through song; both are ascending the same mountain just from different sides." ~ Based on the teachings of Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809)

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

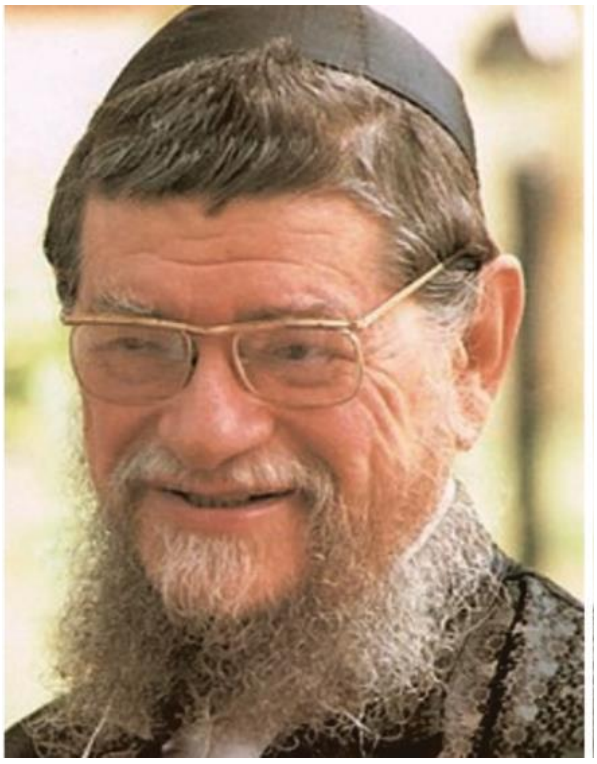
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THE BOY FROM PORTSMOUTH

RABBI MORDECHAI GIFTER הרב מרדכי גיפטר זצ"ל **Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Telshe**





When Mordechai (Max, as he was called) was a young boy, his family moved to Baltimore. There, he got to know Rabbi Yosef Yaakov Marcus, the rabbi of the local shul.

One day when Max was eight years old, he was in the shul with his friend, the son of the rabbi. At the time, a *chashuve* visitor was in the shul. It was **Rabbi Shimon Shkop**, who was collecting money for his yeshivah in Grodno, in Europe.

Rabbi Marcus asked Reb Shimon to give Max a *berachah*. Reb Shimon took Max's hands in his own and said, "*Zolst vellen lernen*. You should (always) want to learn."

Years later, Rabbi Gifter said that this experience changed his life. It made him want to learn. And that's what he did!

Mordechai Gifter was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1915. Although he spent his early years in a community that was far from any yeshivah, he was able to grow in learning and become great. After beginning his yeshivah career at the Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York, in 1932 he travelled to Lithuania to learn in Telshe Yeshivah. He became close to the menahel, R' Zalman Bloch, and became engaged to his daughter, Shoshana. He returned to America before World War II began.

In the mid-1940s, R' Gifter moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to join the staff of Yeshivas Telshe, which had relocated from Lithuania to Cleveland. He remained a rosh yeshivah in Telshe for over fifty years. He had many *talmidim* and had a great impact on Yidden in America.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"L lived on the Lower East Side of New York. He would often shop at a local grocery store owned by a Jewish immigrant. The store owner, recognizing Reb Moshe's remarkable stature, would regularly attempt to give him discounts or refuse payment altogether for his purchases, insisting it was an honor to serve such a distinguished scholar.

Reb Moshe refused these gestures and always insisted on paying the full price. When the store owner would persist, Reb Moshe would explain, "If I accept your generosity, I create a potential problem. When other customers see me paying less, they might think your regular prices are unfair and you may be pressured into lowering your prices which will make it harder for you to make a living and support your family."

The store owner argued that he genuinely wanted to honor Reb Moshe and needed a way to do so. Reb Moshe replied, "You honor me most by allowing me to pay fairly. This way, I can shop here with a clear conscience and you can treat all of your customers equally."

Short Story of The Week by Yoni Shwartz

Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, ZT"L, a renowned dayan for the Badatz, had to have a pacemaker installed late in his life. However, the doctors were worried that he might not wake up after the anaesthesia due to his old age and frailty. Rav Fisher told them he could undergo the procedure without anaesthesia. The doctors thought he was crazy, not understanding how anyone could endure the pain of having the heart cut open while awake. Nevertheless, he reassured them and went ahead with the procedure, learning Torah in his mind to distract himself from the pain. - Throughout the entire procedure, he didn't move a muscle or make a single sound.

Many years later, Rav Fisher had grown even frailer. Simply speaking and answering questions was an enormous challenge for him. Attendants were appointed to ensure that only people with very serious issues would be allowed to speak with him, and even then, they would speak first to his grandson, who would relay the message to Rav Fisher.

One time, a man whom Rav Fisher had known for years came with a very urgent life-or-death halachic dilemma. His grandson relayed the problem to the Rav and then told the man his answer. The man needed clarification on something, so the grandson went back. This conversation continued back-and-forth for a while, about 20 minutes.

Towards the end, his grandson asked, "Zeidi, since this is clearly something very important to you, why didn't you have him brought in

so you could speak face-to-face? The conversation would've been finished in a quarter of the time."

Rav Fisher responded, "This man is suffering! If I see him and witness his pain, I don't know if I'll have the heart to withstand his agony."

Rav Fisher was strong enough to withstand having his heart physically cut open, yet soft enough to feel so much for fellow Jews that their pain becomes unbearable. That is true empathy. That is greatness.



L'Maaseh

There is a story that took place with Rashi, and Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of the terrible First Crusade in the year 1096, which wiped out many Jewish communities, R"L. - Though the nearby cities of Speyer, Mainz, and Worms were devastated by the Crusaders, the Jews of Rashi's city of Troyes were spared from destruction.

When Godfrey was looking to conquer Palestine, he sent messengers asking for an appointment to meet with Rashi, in order to hear the great Tzadik's thoughts regarding his plan.

The fact that Godfrey, who was a vicious enemy of the Jews, would seek such a meeting, was itself remarkable, but Rashi denied him the meeting.

Furious, Godfrey assembled soldiers and burst into Rashi's Beis Medrash, calling out, "Solomon!" Although he did not see anyone in the Bais Medrash, and even though he saw the books were open, he heard Rashi reply, "What does his Highness want?"

Terrified, Godfrey ran outside. Insisting on hearing Rashi's advice, he called to a student of Rashi and swore that no harm would come to Rashi if he came to meet with him. When Rashi agreed and met with Godfrey, Godfrey informed him of his plans, including the fact

that he had 100,000 horsemen ready to invade Palestine. He told Rashi to give him his honest opinion.

Rashi replied that Godfrey would conquer Yerushalayim and that he would rule for three days, and after that, he will be driven out by the Moslems and return to Troyes with only three horses.

Angered to hear this, Godfrey swore that if this did not happen, he would cut Rashi to pieces and feed him to the dogs! However, Rashi's prophetic comments came true.

Coming back four years later to Troyes, Godfrey remembered the words Rashi said to him. He decided that he would indeed punish Rashi, as he currently had four horsemen with him, not the three that Rashi had predicted. But when they entered the gates of Troyes, a large stone fell from the top and killed a horse and its rider.- There were now three horses entering Troyes with Godfrey. Every aspect of Rashi's words had now come true!

How To Live Positive Lives – Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff



The pasukim say: '*They journeyed from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea to circle the land of Edom, and the people became disheartened because of the way.*'

'The people spoke against G-d and against Moshe, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no bread and no water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread."'

'The L-rd sent against the people the venomous snakes, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died.'

'The people came to Moshe and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the L-rd and against you. Pray to the L-rd that He remove the snakes from us." - 'The L-rd said to Moshe, "Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole and let whoever is bitten look at it and live."' [21:4-8]

It is very difficult to understand what exactly was the intended *tikun* for this aveira. Also, the pasuk says: **וַיְשַׁלַּח ה' בָּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים** – Which snakes was this referring to?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that **וַיְשַׁלַּח** doesn't mean that 'He sent', but that 'He let go' – 'He let them loose'. [As it says **וַיְהִי [וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָעֹרֵב] [בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם**]

In Parshas Eikev the pasuk says: **הַמּוֹלִיכְךָ בַּמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא נָחָשׁ שָׂרָף וְעַקְרָב** – '*Who led you through that great and awesome desert, [in which were] snakes, vipers and scorpions.*'

These were the snakes that Hashem sent – They were rampant and bred in this desert. The terrain of a desert has these dangerous reptiles as part of their natural habitat. But Klal Yisrael didn't see them. They never came across them. They went through the midbar as though these wild reptiles never existed. - How?

Because Hakadosh Baruch Hu protected them! He removed the danger of the **נְחָשִׁים** and **שְׂרָפִים**, as well as any other threat to Klal Yisrael. However Klal Yisrael got used to this protection and were not even aware of the dangers nor the protection and chesed that Hashem did for them throughout their journey in the midbar.

When the Yidden complained - **לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוּת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לֶחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל** – Hashem replied, "Do you not realize just how much Divine Providence there is over here? – I'm taking care of you constantly."

So, **וַיְשַׁלַּח ה' בָּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים** – He let them loose. He removed the protection and let the snakes that naturally roamed the desert free to attack the Yidden - **וַיָּמָת עַם־רָב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל**.

What was Hashem trying to show you? That you don't see or realize just how much Hashem does for you on a regular day to day basis. How much Hasgacha and care the He does for you.

The solution was **וְהָיָה֙ כָּל־הַנָּשׁ֔וּךְ וְרָאָ֥ה אֹת֖וֹ וָחָֽי** - to look at this snake on the pole and realize that it was Hashem who was protecting you from the dangerous snakes all this time, and instead providing you with comfort.

Rav Hersch explains, that if a person is faced by challenges, adversities and difficulties, he should realize just how much Hashem really cares for him on a regular basis. Hakadosh Baruch Hu holds our hands and carries us constantly.

When a person recognises this, it will give him the chizuk to enable him to rise above any challenge. This is a very important message to us, that we must see the Hashgacha in our lives that Hashem is caring for us constantly.

A Yeshiva student once noticed that his Rosh Yeshiva would take a long time to recite Shmoneh Esrei. He wanted to emulate his Rosh Yeshiva so he said every paragraph very slowly, focusing on each word with kavanah. Try as he might, however, he could not make his Shmoneh Esrei as long as his Rosh Yeshiva's Shmoneh Esrei. He went to his mentor and said "Rebbe, what is your secret? How can you say such a long Shmoneh Esrei? What do you think about? I've tried everything and I cannot say such a long prayer!"

The Rebbe told his student "I say Shmoneh Esrei as fast as everyone else; but before I get to Modim, I stop and I think 'What do I have to be thankful for?' I think that I have my health and I have my family. I have my children and I have my grandchildren and I have this and I have that. In my mind, I go through all the things that I am thankful for. That is what takes me so long."



A Guide To The Perplexing Fast Day of Erev Shabbos Parshas Chukas

The Magen Avraham cites a 'practice of individuals' to fast on the Friday prior to the reading of Parshas Chukas [Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Chapter 580]. In general, it is an anomaly to have a fast day scheduled for a Friday. Of even greater significance is the fact that most fast days are established on a specific calendar date, while this one is not. The Magen Avraham writes that no matter what day of the month the Friday prior to Parshas Chukas falls, that is the day when 'individuals' fast.

What is the significance of this fast day? It commemorates the burning of 20 wagon-loads of the Talmud and other Sefarim [Rabbinic books] in France. When the event happened, it occurred on the 9th day of Tammuz. However, various Rabbinic authorities of that day learned through dreams that the 'cause' of the incident was not related to the day on the calendar, but to the fact that it was the day before the Torah reading of Parshas Chukas.

The Magen Avraham explains that the Aramaic Targum of the opening words of the parsha [Bamidbar 19:2] "Zos Chukas HaTorah" [This is the law of the Torah] is "da Gezeiras Oraiysa" [this is the Torah's decree]. This was understood to be a Torah decree that such a tragic event would occur on the Friday before this Torah reading.

The Imrei Shammai supplies additional historical background to this incident. He says that in the exact place where the Talmud and other Sefarim were burnt, the Jews of that town had in previous years publicly burnt the Rambam's Guide To The Perplexed (Moreh Nevuchim).

The Moreh Nevuchim was a controversial work. In those days, the Rambam did not yet have the unquestioning allegiance that he gained in later generations. As surprising as it may seem to us, he had his detractors and there were authorities who were highly critical of the Moreh Nevuchim. In fact, there were even some places where his Book of Knowledge (Sefer HaMadah) (the first volume of his Major Work "The Yad HaChazakah") was not accepted.

As a Heavenly punishment for this earlier burning of the Rambam's works, 20 cart loads of Torah books were now publicly burnt. When the Jewish community saw this, they recognized their earlier misdeed and repented by establishing a fast day. They prayed for forgiveness and subsequently there was no more controversy about the Guide To The Perplexed.

In this way they were very fortunate. They had a clear Sign from Heaven in terms of what they had done wrong. It did not take a genius to put two and two together and draw the appropriate conclusion. The connection was obvious. This is the historical background of the custom of 'individuals' to fast on the Erev Shabbos preceding Parshas Chukas.

Salivating Over The Opportunity of Restoring Domestic Tranquillity

I wish to share a Rashi in Pirkei Avos, which is based on a Medrash. When Aharon died, the pasuk says "the entire House of Israel wept for him for 30 days" [Bamidbar 20:29]. Our Sages point out that Aharon was especially beloved because he was a lover of peace who dedicated his life to making peace in domestic disputes and in various social controversies.

Sometimes when a great sage of Israel dies, the Torah scholars who learned from him and who appreciated his Torah greatness feel the loss. However the masses who did not fully appreciate what the

Torah scholar accomplished with his Torah, do not mourn as much. In the case of Aharon, everyone felt the tremendous loss.

The Medrash relates the following: Rav Meir delivered a Torah lecture on one Friday night. There was a woman in the audience who arrived home from the Torah lecture late and by the time she arrived home, the Sabbath candles had already burnt out. Her husband was angry with her and told her "I do not want to see you again until you spit into the eye of the person who was giving the lecture that you attended".

The woman, unfortunately, sat outside her house for several weeks. All the women saw her and asked her what was going on. She explained the story. The women went to Rabbi Meir and related the situation to him in hope that he would have a solution. The Medrash states that Rabbi Meir saw the problem through Divine Inspiration even before the women approached him. When the women arrived, Rabbi Meir told them that he had an eye ailment which could only be cured by having a woman "whisper into his eye" (a type of "medicine" which was believed to be effective in those days). He asked them if they knew of any woman who was expert in this technique.

The women offered the services of the estranged wife. She approached Rabbi Meir and confessed that she knew nothing about the technique of "whispering into eyes" as a medicinal cure. He told her "Do not worry. I'll tell you what to do. Just spit into this eye seven times and all will be well". She spat into the eye 7 times and her husband (who by this time regretted his rashness) took her back.

Rashi [Avos 1:12] quotes a similar incident about Aharon himself. He brings this as an example of the lengths to which Aharon went to promote and restore peace between husband and wife. Even if a husband would get angry with his wife and make a vow that he would not take her back unless she spat into the eye of the High Priest,

Aharon would humiliate himself and ask her to spit in his eye. Aharon was willing to do whatever it took to reestablish Shalom Bayis [domestic tranquillity], even if it involved his personal disgrace. That is why "the entire House of Israel wept for him for 30 days".

Aharon Kohen Gadol: Lover of Peace and Pursuer of Peace

Parshas Chukas contains the narratives of the death of both Aharon the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] and Miriam HaNevia [the prophetess]. The pasuk states that when Aharon died he was mourned by the entire House of Israel (*kol Beis Yisrael*) for thirty days [Bamidbar 20:29]. If we look ahead to Parshas Zos HaBracha where Moshe Rabbeinu dies [Devorim 34:8], the Torah also says that the Jewish people mourned for thirty days, but the expression "kol Beis Yisrael" [the entire House of Israel] is not used there. By Moshe the *pasuk* merely says "*Bnei Yisrael*" mourned for him.

Rashi takes note of this in our parsha: The expression "*kol Beis Yisrael*" includes both the men and the women. The universal mourning for Aharon was because he was a peacemaker. He went out of his way to make peace between fighting husbands and wives and other friends who had experienced partings of the way. Aharon had a reputation for being a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace (*ohev shalom, v'rodef shalom*). Therefore, the women also felt a tremendous closeness to him and they participated equally with the men in mourning his death, which was not necessarily the case with Moshe, whose primary interaction with the nation was teaching the men Torah.

This troubles the **Maharal in the Gur Aryeh**. The Maharal argues that it is inconceivable that the entire House of Israel did not feel closeness to Moshe Rabbeinu. He was their leader for the last 40 years. He took them out of Egypt and he took care of all their needs in the Wilderness. He pleaded on their behalf before the Almighty.

He taught them Torah. He provided for the needs of men, women, and children — the entire Nation of Israel! The Maharal is unwilling to accept the idea that the women did not cry by the death of the leader of the nation.

Therefore, The Maharal concludes that certainly the women cried by Moshe's death as well. However, it was still a different level of crying than what took place when Aharon died. This is because while true that what Moshe provided to *Klal Yisrael* was of value to both men and women, there was not a difference between how he dealt with the men and how he dealt with the women. He was the leader. He made sure that <u>everyone</u> was safe, <u>everyone</u> was fed, <u>everyone</u> was taken care of, and <u>everyone</u> knew the Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu provided this uniform service to men and women equally.

The crying that took place upon Moshe's death was indistinguishable — there was no difference between the men's crying and the women's crying. However, the Maharal writes, by Aharon, when he saw a dispute brewing between husband and wife he treated them <u>differently</u>. When trying to make peace between two people who are angry at one another it is important to address each of them according to their own psychological makeup. When husbands and wives are unfortunately at each other's throats, it is necessary to talk to the men in one way and to the women in another way.

Aharon's interaction with the members of the Jewish nation, unlike his brother's, was <u>not</u> uniform. He accepted as his mission to be a peacemaker in Klal Yisrael. In order to accomplish this mission, it was necessary to have two ways of addressing the litigants. When a husband complains about his wife that she does not do this and does not do that, you need to tell the husband "but listen, she bore your children, she takes care of your children, look at her other good traits, etc." When a woman complains about her husband, "he is a slob, he never cleans up after himself, he always leaves his socks on

the floor of the tent, etc." Aharon responded differently. He tells her, "but listen, he is a good provider, he is a Talmid Chochom, etc."

The language and the approach was distinct, tailoring his message to each party depending on what was appropriate for them to hear and what would be effective in reestablishing marital harmony.

This is what Rashi means. There was a different type of crying at the funeral of the two brothers. In Aharon's case, he meant one thing to the women and another thing to the men. The *Aveilus* was not identical throughout the nation, but rather personalized to the different components thereof — men remembered him one way and women remembered him another way. Moshe Rabbeinu's service to the nation was uniform and the *Aveilus* the people experienced when he passed on was also uniform.

Aharon's Method of Making Ba'lei Teshuva: Smiles not Stones

The Avos D'Rav Nasson echoes this same theme. When Aharon dies, the pasuk says that the entire House of Israel (implying men and women) mourned. However, when Moshe dies, the pasuk states that the Children of Israel (implying the men only) mourned.

The relationship between Klal Yisroel and Moshe Rabbenu was not the same as between Klal Yisroel and Aharon. Moshe had to give mussar, had to set the people straight, and had to issue uncompromising judgments.

Aharon, however, never criticized. He was a peacemaker who was beloved by everyone. Aharon would greet wicked people with a smile. He did not spit or throw stones. He said "Good Morning." The response of the wicked, often was, "How can I continue to sin, it will distress Aharon?" The Medrash declares that in this way "he caused many people to repent from doing evil." He caused them to repent,

not through anger or disgust, but with Shalom. That is how he was so successful.

Mr. Harry Wolpert, a long-time supporter of Torah causes in Baltimore, had been a student of **Rabbi Baruch Ber Lebovitz**, the Kaminetzer Rosh Yeshiva. When Mr. Wolpert came to Baltimore in the early 1900s, he repeatedly faced the nisayon [test; challenge] of Chillul Shabbos [Shabbos Desecration]. Today, we do not need to face the common nisayon of those years — "If you don't come in on Saturday, don't bother coming Monday."

Mr. Wolpert related that he faced this temptation many times when he needed to support his wife and children. What stopped him from succumbing to the temptation? It was the image of his Rebbe, Reb Baruch Ber. Reb Baruch Ber was known as a Rebbe who loved his students. Reb Baruch Ber cherished each student. This love, shown to a student, was what stopped Mr. Wolpert from becoming a Mechalel Shabbos [violator of the Shabbos].

We Must Integrate the Lesson of the Snakes Into Our Daily Lives

Aharon haKohen had just passed away, and the people again became agitated. "The people spoke against G-d and Moshe: 'Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this wilderness? For there is no food and there is no water, and our soul is at its limit with the insubstantial food.'" [Bamidbar 21:5] If there seems to be one underlying theme about which they repeatedly complain – it is about the *mann*. Basically, they say they are disgusted with the *mann*.

It is important to realize something that is not readily apparent. Thirty-eight years elapsed between last week's parsha (Parshas Korach) and this week's parsha (Parshas Chukas). The incident of the Meraglim (in Parshas Shelach) preceded – at least according to the Ramban – the story of Korach. Those events both occurred at the

beginning of their sojourn in the Wilderness. For the next 38 years, nothing dramatic occurred — at least not anything the Torah shares with us. Thirty-eight years later, they are again on the boundary of Eretz Yisrael, and they are complaining again. They complained at the beginning of the 40 years and they complained at the end of the 40 years. What is their complaint? "We can't stand the mann."

It would seem to be that the mann is the greatest thing going. It tasted like whatever each person desired. Someone wants milchigs one night – it tastes like dairy. Someone wants fleishigs the next night – it tastes like meat. There was no bodily waste created by it. It was great! Yet, it seems that when Bnei Yisrael start complaining, they always complain about the mann. What is the message here? The *pasuk* continues, "Hashem sent the snakes, the burning ones, against the people, and they bit the people, and a large multitude of Israel died." [21:6] Throughout Sefer Bamidbar, the Almighty punished the people in different ways. Here, Hashem uses a new method – they are attacked by snakes. Why snakes? Why could they not just drop dead? Why did the earth not swallow them up like last week? Why did fire not come down from heaven and consume them like in Parshas Shmini? Why snakes?

"The people came to Moshe and said, 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against Hashem and against you! Pray to Hashem that He remove from us the snakes.' Moshe prayed for the people." [Bamidbar 21:7] What was the remedy for this plague? What was the cure for someone who was bitten by the snake?

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Make yourself a burning one and place it on a pole; and it will be that anyone who has been bitten will look at it and live.'" [Bamidbar 21:8]. The remedy for snakebites was to look at a snake! This has to be the most peculiar anti-venom serum ever created! Just look at the snake and you will be cured.

In fact, the international symbol of medicine has become the caduceus, a staff with two snakes wrapped around it. The source for

that is this Biblical passage – the cure was the snakes. What is the message here? The plague is strange and the cure for the plague is even stranger.

My son, Reb Yakov, told me he heard an interpretation from a Rabbi Bukspan, which provides an interesting answer to this question. The Gemara [Yoma 76a] says that the disciples of Rabi Shimon bar Yochai asked him, "Why did the *mann* not descend for Israel once a year (in a quantity enough to last them for a whole year)?" Rabi Shimon bar Yochai answered them with a parable to a king who had an only son. He provided his son with his needs of sustenance once a year, for the whole year. Therefore, the son only came to see the king once a year, when he needed money.

The Gemara says that when the king gave his son enough money for a whole year, he heard from him once a year. Therefore, the Gemara continues, the king changed his method of financing his son. He provided for his daily needs, one day at a time. This way the king heard from his son every day.

So too it was with Bnei Yisroel. Every single day people would worry – how am I going to feed my family? Every day they were afraid – maybe the *mann* will not fall tomorrow and my entire family will be wiped out in famine. The result was that everyone had their hearts focused on their father in heaven. The *mann* came from heaven so they needed to pray every day: "Master of the Universe, give us food." That is why the *mann* came down every day.

This Gemara is saying something that the **Sefas Emes** articulates in a different context. The Sefas Emes says that Hashem cursed the Snake – "You shall eat dust all the days of your life." The world asks – what kind of curse is that? Dirt is available ubiquitously. The Snake will never worry about the source of his next meal. However, the curse is that the Almighty is, in effect, saying to the Snake: "Here is your sustenance. Do not bother me again. I do not want to see you ever again." The contact that every other living creature needs to

have with its Creator does not apply to the Snake. This is not a blessing. It is a curse.

This is why Hashem gave *mann* every single day. He wanted *Klal Yisrael* to realize that we are dependent on Him, and that "He is the one who gives you strength to act with valor…" [Devorim 8:18]. That is precisely why they did not like the *mann*. Human beings do not like to feel their dependence. We like to delude ourselves and think we are independent. That is why they kept on complaining about the *mann*. The *Ribono shel Olam* had this calculation – you should know that you are dependent on Me. The people resented that. They did not want to admit this fact.

"*Modim Anachnu Lach…*" *Modim* does not only mean 'we thank.' *Modim* means 'we admit…' that our lives are given over to Your Hand, and that our souls are delivered to You, and that Your miracles are with us every single day. We need to admit these facts, as much as we do not like to do so. That is why they did not like the *mann*.

Now the punishment they received makes sense. The punishment came from snakes because the people were acting like snakes – they did not want to be dependent on Divine handouts. That was the fate of the Snake. The *Ribono shel Olam* was sending them a message: Snakes. You want to be like the primordial Snake? Then the snakes will bite you. Do you know what the cure for this is? "You shall stare at the copper snake and be cured." The Talmud [Rosh Hashannah 29a] comments that it was not a matter simply of looking at the snakes – because snakes cannot cure. The idea was that they put the snake on a high place and raised it on a flagpole. When they lifted their eyes towards their Father in Heaven, they were cured. The cure was in looking upwards and figuring out from where their Help came from, and upon whom they were dependent.

That was the *aveyra* [sin]. That was the punishment and that was the cure. The *aveyra* was saying, "I want to be independent. I do not want to realize my dependence on the Almighty." The punishment

was: You are acting like snakes – you will get bitten by snakes! The cure came when Israel cast their gaze up toward heaven.

This is a lesson that is as important today as it was then. We think that with all our wisdom, we can go and we can come, and we can invent and we can function independently. However, it is "He who gives you strength to act with valor." We dare not say, "It is my strength and the power of my hand which has made for me all this valor." [Devorim 8:17] We need Him for every step and breath we take. The lesson of the snakes is one we need to integrate into our daily lives.

The Death of Miriam – Closure, But No Tears

This week's parsha contains the deaths of two out of the three great shepherds of Israel. The trustworthy shepherds who had shepherded Klal Yisrael through the latter part of their time in Egypt and now through the Wilderness were the three children of Amram and Yocheved — Miriam, Aharon, and Moshe. In this week's parsha, both Miriam [Bamidbar 20:1] and Aharon [20:28] die.

In connection with Miriam's death, the Torah uses a peculiar language: "She died there and was buried there." What is the pasuk trying to tell us with this apparent redundancy?

The Torah is contrasting Miriam's death with that of her brothers. Later in the parsha, when Aharon died, Moshe, Aharon, and Elazar ascended the mountain but only Moshe and Elazar came down from the mountain. No one was aware of exactly when Aharon died or how he died. The people were merely informed that "Aharon is dead."

Everyone knew that Moshe Rabbeinu was about to die, but nevertheless — as the Torah tells us at the end of Zos HaBracha — no one was aware of where he died and in fact until today we do not know where he is buried.

However, Miriam died THERE and was buried THERE. People knew when she died, where she died and where she was buried.

What is the point of all this?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin makes a very interesting observation: When Aharon died the pasuk says, "The entire House of Israel mourned him" [Bamidbar 20:29]. Chazal point out that when Aharon died, there seems to have been an even greater mourning than there was over the death of Moshe Rabbeinu. Nevertheless, the Torah does mention that when Moshe Rabbeinu died, the people mourned his loss as well [Devorim 34:8]. However concerning Miriam's death, the Torah only says that she died and was buried. There is no reference to any public mourning. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin asks: Why not?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin answers that all three of the "shepherds" lived very long lives. At this point in history, people usually did not live 120 years. The normal situation is that when older people die and they have lived a long and fruitful life, there is not such profound mourning. Whether this is appropriate or not, most people do not view the passing of an elderly person as a tragedy. Such funerals are usually not overly emotional or marked with a great deal of public crying, certainly not beyond the immediate family members.

This is what happened with Miriam. People were aware that she was going to die, they saw her die, and they saw where she was buried. There was emotional closure.

When Aharon died, that was a tremendous shock. One day he was here, the next day he was gone. There was no opportunity to share any last thoughts. He went up the mountain with his brother and son and the two of them came back and announced "Aharon is dead." There was no opportunity to close things off and say goodbye.

When someone — even when he is old — is taken away from us like that, it is a shock and therefore there is public mourning.

In the case of Moshe, people knew he was going to die. He came to them and gave them his final blessings and charge. The people said goodbye to him. But to not be able to go to his gravesite — or even to know where he was buried — that was hard to handle. People were traumatized by the fact that they had not been able to participate in the funeral of their great leader or would not ever visit his kever [grave]. This trauma led to tears and strong emotion, regardless of the advanced age of Moshe at the time of his death.

Miriam was an old woman who lived an illustrious life. People knew she died. They knew where she was buried. Spiritual people realize the great tragedy in the death of any righteous person, and from that perspective Miriam's death was certainly worthy of great mourning. But for the average person, there was closure and consequently there was no great out pouring of emotion from the masses upon the death of Miriam.

The Connection Between The Parah Adumah and the Golden Mean

The Shaloh haKadosh writes that it is impossible to fathom the secrets of Parah Adumah [Red Heifer]. Nevertheless, he says, a person should try to understand whatever lessons he is able to derive from this quintessential 'chok' [non-rational law] of the Torah.

The most perplexing aspect of this procedure is that on the one hand it purifies those who are impure, and, on the other hand, it contaminates those who were previously pure. [Certain methods of handling the mixture result in the Kohen and/or his clothing becoming tameh.] The Shaloh links this paradox of the Parah Adumah to a principle that Maimonides introduces regarding a person's character traits.

The Rambam writes that a person should always try to follow the "Golden Mean" in every human emotion and character trait. In

general, extremes are not good. However, the Rambam qualifies this rule by stating that if a person has a particular character defect which causes him to deviate from the "middle road" in one direction, the way to correct this deficiency is to overcompensate in the other direction — by going to the opposite extreme for some period of time.

For example, if a person is overly miserly, the way to correct that is to go to the other extreme and temporarily be overly generous. If a person is overly frivolous, he should compensate by acting overly serious for a time.

The Shaloh restates this prescription of the Rambam by noting that if a person had been a "tahor" — namely one who was behaving properly along the middle road — and then he went to an extreme, such a practice would contaminate him. However, a person who was not behaving properly and had deviated in one direction, may in fact become "purified" by going to the opposite extreme for a time, and thus reestablishing his equilibrium.

The Parah Adumah is an example of something that can be poison to a "healthy" person, but is nevertheless therapeutic to a person who is "ill". The person who is tameh needs the ashes of the Parah Adumah. He is "sick" and this is therapeutic for him. But a person who is healthy who engages in something which is therapeutic for an ill person, may in fact contaminate himself.

This exactly parallels the Rambam's advice regarding character traits: Extremism may be appropriate for someone who is already dysfunctional, but extremism is destructive for a healthy normally functioning individual.



"Everything can be taken away from me – except for Hashem, he is always with me." ~ Rabbi Aharon of Karlin (1736-1772)



We Must Understand: Not Everything Can be Understood

In this week's parsha we learn of the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah [RedHeifer]. Rash"i quotes the Chaza"l that this mitzvah is known as the quintessential "chok".

This mitzvah is, in fact, a tremendous paradox. The Parah Adumah was used to be me'taher people who were Tameh Meis. People who have the impurity of Tameh Meis have no way of achieving purity other than by means of the Parah Adumah. Yet, on the other hand, any person who had anything to do with the preparing or the carrying or the sprinkling of the Parah Adumah became ritually impure, himself. The paradox of the Parah Adumah, thus, is that it makes those who are impure, pure and those who are pure, impure.

Our Rabbis tell us that the verse in Koheles [7:23] "All this I tried to understand with my wisdom; I said I will figure it out, but it is still distant from me" refers to Solomon stating that he understood the entire Torah, except for the chapter of Parah Adumah which remained elusive –despite all his inquiry.

The Medrash further states that G-d told Moshe, "To you I will explain the paradox of Parah Adumah, but to every other human being I will always hide its mystery." However the Medrash does say that in the Messianic Era, G-d will finally explain to us the mystery of Parah Adumah.

We see from over here that G-d made a deliberate and conscious effort to keep the mystery of Parah Adumah hidden from us. Shlomo [Solomon] with his wisdom, should have been able to understand Parah Adumah. But G-d said, "I've got to keep this a secret. There is a reason. I will tell it to Klal Yisroel in the distant future. But for now, no one can understand Parah Adumah."

Why? Does G-d want to prove that he is smarter than us? Is this a game where G-d dangles something in front of us, teasing us with our inability to figure it out?

The Be'er Yosef says, the reason G-d hid the understanding of Parah Adumah from us, is to teach us a vital lesson. The lesson is that there are things in life that are inexplicable. We must learn the lesson that things will happen in life that we will never be able to understand. We will come across things that will be terrible paradoxes, things that have apparently no rhyme and no reason.

What is this area of paradox that parallels Parah Adumah? It is the area of Tzadik v'ra lo and Rasha v'Tov lo. Just as Parah Adumah is a paradox that makes absolutely no sense, so too, there exists a paradox in life that we meet time and time and time again.

Logic would dictate just the reverse: A person is righteous, he is a noble Jew and unfortunately he suffers. Another person is wicked, he does everything that is forbidden and he is wealthy and prospers and has honor. Does this make sense? It's a paradox!

However, for some reason, that is the way that G-d made His world. We will have to deal with that issue and problem. So, G-d educated us in paradoxes. What is that education? Parah Adumah.

Every single time, a Jew would be faced with the same paradox. He walks in tameh and walks out tahor while the Kohen would walks in tahor and walks out tameh. It does not seem to make sense, but at least the Jew would be exposed to and get accustomed to a paradox.

The Jew would learn that there are some things in this world that don't seem to make sense. That is why G-d hid the reason for Parah Adumah from us and it is also why in the future He will explain Parah Adumah to us.

The Talmud in Tractate Pessachim [50a] quotes the verse "In that Day G-d will be One and His Name will be One" [Zecharia 14:9] and asks, "In this world, G-d's Name is not One?" The Gemara answers that in this world we make the blessing "…dayan ha'emes" on bad news and the blessing "ha'tov v'ham'ey'tiv" on good news. However, in the Future World we will make "ha'tov v'ham'ey'tiv" on everything.

Rash"i explains that in the future there will be no bad news because then we will understand that even the bad is good. In the future, the paradox of "Tzadik v'ra lo" will no longer exist. Therefore, in the future we will be able to hear the reason for Parah Adumah, because by then we will have learned our lesson.

There is a fascinating Shibolei HaLeket which the Magen Avraham cites in Chapter 580. He writes "concerning the tragedy which happened, because of our multitude of sins, in our day 5004 (1244 c.e.) in which 24 containers of Sifrei Torah, Neviim, Medrashim, Gemaras were publicly burnt…" When did this occur? "…on Friday of the week in which the Torah portion was 'This is the Chok of the Torah…' (Chukas)".

The Yahrtzeit of that terrible burning was the Erev Shabbos of Parshas Chukas. Some individuals have the custom to fast on Friday of Parshas Chukas as an atonement and a memorial to that terrible tragedy. The Shibolei HaLeket asks, why was the calendar date of this tragedy not preserved? How many days into Tammuz did it occur? Normally, Fast Days are associated with the calendar — the 17th of Tammuz, the 9th of Av, the 3rd of Tishrei, etc. We've never heard of a Fast Day pegged to a day of the week!

The Shibolei HaLeket says they asked in dream and were told that the Fast Day commemorating this event had to be pegged to the Erev Shabbos of Parshas Chukas. This tragic event is connected to reading of Parshas Chukas. This tragic event, the paradox of Sifrei Torah being burnt, which makes no sense, whatsoever, has nothing to do with a date. It has to do with Parshas Chukas.

The lesson is that there are things which we will never understand — Sifrei Torah being burnt… or Jews being burnt … or Tzadikim suffering. - That is why this Fast Day is pegged to Parshas Chukas.

It All Stems From The Same Source

The parsha contains the attack of snakes [21:8]. In order to stop the plague, Moshe was told "Make for yourself a serpent and place it upon a flagpole". The antidote for the attack by snakes was to fashion a copper serpent and place it atop a banner. Anyone who was bitten by the snake would look at the banner and become healed.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz notes the irony of the fact that the cure for the snake bites should itself be a snake. It would be more logical to put the opposite thing on the banner — a vial of anti-snake serum or anti-poison serum. One would think that the last thing in the world that would be effective as a cure would be a snake itself!

What is the symbolism of the fact that the cause of the problem is itself the item to look at in order to cure the problem?

When a person becomes angry with someone, he may yell at or strike him. On the other hand when we love someone, we kiss or embrace the person. These two different emotions — anger and love - - engender two different manifestations. With G-d, on the other hand, everything is from the same source. When He punishes us, it is not out of anger. It is either in order for us to grow from the experience or for the experience to atone for us, or in order to test us in some way. G-d never acts out of spite or anger. Therefore, the same source for the pain can be the source for the cure, because even the 'pain' was a form of G-d's love.

"For as a father disciplines his children, this is how the L-rd disciplines you." [Devorim 8:5] When a father disciplines his children, it should never be out of anger. Discipline should always serve the purpose of the child's need to rectify him or herself.

Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate that the same snake that killed can be the snake that brings life. It all comes from the same source of love and concern for His children.

What Was Lost By Failing To Speak To The Rock?

The incident of Mei Merivah. What was the exact nature of Moshe's aveyra? This aveyra cost Moshe the privilege of entering Eretz Yisroel. According to many commentaries, the aveyra was that Moshe hit the rock rather than speaking to it.

The obvious problem with this explanation is that there does not seem to be much difference between bringing forth water from a rock by hitting it, or by speaking to it. Why was it so important to speak to the rock? There was apparently some specific lesson that the people were supposed to learn when Moshe spoke to the rock.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, suggests that the lesson is that sometimes in life it is necessary to speak to rocks. Sometimes we need to speak to people who seem unreceptive to what we have to say. Sometimes we need to speak to a congregation or a community or a class and we feel that we are speaking — if not to a rock, then at least — to a wall. Rabbis have been doing this from time immemorial. This goes back to the days of the prophets. They speak, they speak, they speak and it is as if they are talking to a wall.

Even those people who do not have the opportunity to speak to a community, may have the opportunity to speak to children. Sometimes talking to children can also feel like talking to a wall. The intended message of talking to the rock was that it is necessary to speak to others, even if it seems like you are speaking to a rock. The Chofetz Chaim often said, "It is necessary to speak to the people, whether one thinks it helps or not. At least seeds are planted."

Sometimes we speak to our children and we think that they are not listening, but we need to keep speaking. We need to keep the dialog open. The lesson of Mei Merivah was so important to the Jewish People because it taught that even when a person speaks to a rock — sometimes there are results.



זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה - And then the Torah goes on to explain the most fascinating mitzvah of Parah Adumah.

We have a situation where someone became tamei. So, we take the ashes of the Parah Adumah and sprinkle it on the one who became tamei. And lo and behold, the one who became tamei is now tahor and the one who sprinkled who was tahor now becomes tamei. His very sprinkling of the ashes on to a tamei person to purify him, transfers the tumma onto himself.





Why is this considered to be what The Torah says is **זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה** – '***This is The Torah***'?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that The Torah says that this is **זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה** because essentially what's going on is that somebody is being *moissar nefesh* for somebody else. Somebody is giving up from himself for the benefit of another person. – **That is the Torah**!

זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה means that the greatest gift that you can give to somebody else, is sacrificing yourself for somebody else.

Have an amazing Shabbos!

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt [לעילוי נשמת שמואל אביגדר בן יצחק מאיר ע״ה]

Hitting the rock



The Gemara [Megila 18a] tells us **מלה בסלע משתוקא בתרין** - if a word is worth a Sela (currency) then silence is worth two. The Iturai Torah tells us that if Moshe would have spoken to the rock (**מלה בסלע** as **סלע** also means a rock), water would have come out. However, he was silent and instead hit the rock- twice that is- **משתוקא בתרין** . After hitting it twice water came out. [20:11] The Beer Mayim Chaim tells us a fascinating hint to this. Spelling out the word **סלע** we get **סמך למד עין**. If we 'hit' these letters twice (removing the first and last letters of each) our result is - **מים** !

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - History of the Daf

In 1919, **R' Alexander Zusha Friedman** (1899-1943), created and served as editor for the first Agudas Yisrael publication titled "Digleinu" (our banner). The 1920, Av 5681, issue contained a proposal by R' Moshe Menachem Mendel Spivak to organize a worldwide "Chevra Shas," involving businessmen, labourers, and workers to study a Daf Gemara daily to finish Shas. So, the idea of Jews in all parts of the world studying the same Daf each day, with the goal of completing Shas, was proposed by R' Spivak.

When the idea didn't take hold, R' Spivak, the rabbi of Krasnobrod near Lublin, approached **R' Meir Shapiro** (1887-1933). R' Spivak's

idea was for R' Shapiro to speak about the Daf Yomi plan at the May, 1924, cornerstone-laying ceremony for the construction of the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin building.



Feeling that this wasn't the right forum to introduce the concept, R' Shapiro, instead chose to speak about it at the first Knessia Gedola, held in Vienna in August 1923, which would be attended by the greatest rabbis of the generation. However, R' Shapiro had second thoughts about introducing the concept as he was concerned that the idea was controversial.

Before speaking, he approached the **Chofetz Chaim** about the idea who advised R' Shapiro to come late to the stage. When he entered the Chofetz Chaim rose and greeted him and ushered him to the podium. This gave R' Shapiro the support he needed. The idea quickly took hold.

R' Meir Shapiro introduced the idea of Daf Yomi at the Knessia Gedola in 1923 at age 35, in front of many Gedolim who were much older than him, like this: The Gemara relates that Rabban Gamliel said that he was once on a ship when the ship was sinking and he was pained by the thought of R' Akiva who had been on that ship since he was now surely lost. When he came up to dry land, R' Akiva came

and deliberated before Rabban Gamliel in a matter of law. Rabban Gamliel asked him, "Who raised you out of the water."

The reply: I took hold of a דף - a board from the ship and before every wave that came, I bowed my head and it passed over me. R' Shapiro said there are so many waves—secularism, immorality, materialism...These need to be fought with a Daf of Gemara daily.



R' Shapiro also viewed the program as a way to unify the Jewish people. As he explained to the Congress delegates: What a great thing! A Jew travels by boat and takes Gemara Brachos under his arm. He travels for 15 days from Eretz Yisrael to America, and each day he learns the Daf. When he arrives in America, he enters a Beis Midrash in New York and finds Jews learning the very same Daf that he studied on that day, and he gladly joins them. Another Jew leaves the States and travels to Brazil or Japan, and he first goes to the Beis Midrash, where he finds everyone learning the same Daf that he himself learned that day. Could there be greater unity than this?

R' Shmuel Wosner (1913-2015) was asked how R' Meir Shapiro merited the unparalleled public learning of Daf Yomi? He said that R' Meir Shapiro had an aspiration to exalt Torah and the Jews. He was a leader, great in Torah and Yirah and loved Jews. This was surely his purpose.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt- The eternal bone



On Shabbos we receive a **נשמה יתירה** - additional soul. [Beitza 16a]. In fact, the word **ביני** in **ביני ובין בני ישראל** [Shemos 31:17]. which speaks about Shabbos, are the initials **בשבת יש נשמה יתירה** For this reason, the **Baal Haturim** as well as the **Daas Zekanim** [Ki Sisa, 31:17] point out that the last letters of **וביום השביעי שבת ויִנפש** spell **שתים** since we receive an additional soul. Furthermore, **ויִנפש** alludes to this as it is rooted in **נפש**. Moreover, in **לכה דודי** we say **פני שבת נקבלה**, where the initials spell **נפש**.

After Shabbos, our **נשמה יתירה** leaves. For this reason, we smell **בשמים** by Havdala (Mishna Brura 491:3). Indeed, **R' Tzadok Hakohen** (1823-1900) would faint every Motzai Shabbos when his **נשמה יתירה** would leave him as he actually felt it. To comfort us in dealing with the loss of our **נשמה יתירה** we have a Melave Malka.

The Kadmonim say that the limb **נסכוי** stays in existence until **תחית המתים** - resurrection of the dead, even after all the bones rot. This limb only derives pleasure from the food of Melave Malka.

Another name it is known by, is the **לוז** - Luz bone. Is it any coincidence that we find this word **לוז** written by Yaakov- [Breishis 28:19, 30:37] **לח ולוז** and **ואולם לוז** - who never died -**יעקב אבינו לא מת**, as the **לוז** is eternal and never dies. [Taanis 5b].

The **לוז** bone is nourished exclusively by Melave Malka since it didn't have pleasure from the sin of Adam. This is because he sinned on Erev Shabbos and the **לוז** bone only gets nourished on Motzai Shabbos by Melave Malka. Consequently, the curse of [Breishis 3:19] **ואל עפר תשוב** - to dust shall you return, doesn't apply to this bone. As a result, **תחית המתים** stems from it.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Fixing the Golden Mistake



The **עוללות אפרים** tells us that from the sin of the **עגל**, there is a residue of **גזל , עריות** and **לשון הרע** that remained for future generations. We see this hinted to in the Gemara that tells us about three sins that people transgress [Baba Basra 165a] -**(אבק) לשון הרע , עריות , גזל**. Take the initials of each of these and what is the result? **עגל !**

How can these three be rectified? The Mishna [Avos 1:2] tells us the world stands on Torah, **עבודה** - service of Hashem and **גמילות חסדים** - kind deeds. These three correspond to the three sins we mentioned. **לימוד התורה** corresponds to Lashon Hara, as both are with the faculty of speech. **עבודה** parallels **עריות**- The Krias Hatorah of Mincha on Yom Kippur- the day of **עבודה** - is the section of **עריות**. Lastly, **גזל** lines up with **גמילות חסדים** . The opposite of taking from someone is to give and do kindness for him.

Another incredible hint is found in the first letters of **לימוד התורה, עבודה, גמילות חסדים** , which spell **עגל**. Anytime we engage ourselves in any of these three acts, it serves as a rectification for the sin of the **עגל**.

ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את רע הגזירה - Teshuva, Tefila and Tzedaka can remove an evil decree said during the Yomim Noraim. In the Machzor, above these words, it is written **צום, קול, ממון** - fast, voice and money. **צום** corresponds to **עבודה** and **עריות** , as this is one of the forms of getting close to Hashem. **קול** matches up with Torah and Lashon Hara, as it is from the mouth. **ממון** is associated with **גמילות חסדים** and **גזל** , as acts of kindness can be performed with money.

The words **צום, קול, ממון** each have a Gematria of 136, which when added up is 408. This is the numerical value of **זאת** . With this, says the Bas Ayin, we can grasp **זאת חקת התורה** this is the decree of the Torah (which is referring to the **פרה אדומה** - that which atones for the **עגל**), as through doing these three we rectify the sin of the **עגל**.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt- Don't Forget Shabbos



A Jew must have two signs at any given time. During the week we have a Bris and Tefillin. Being that Shabbos is a sign, we don't wear Tefilin on Shabbos since we already have two signs- Shabbos and Bris.[Shulchan Aruch, Orach Ohaim 31:1]. The three signs are hinted to in the word **שבת** as it forms an acronym of **שבת, ברית, תפילין** . Indeed, the word **שבת** forms an acronym of **שבת במקום תפילין** .One is not allowed to have his mind veer off when he is wearing Tefillin (**היסח הדעת**). [Shulchan Aruch, Orach Ohaim 38:9] Likewise one shouldn't have his mind veer off from Shabbos, and as it says **זכור את יום השבת**. [Shemos 20:8] One should constantly be thinking of Shabbos. This is alluded to **זכור את יום השבת לקדשו** as **לקדשו** is a contraction of **לקדש ו** - to sanctify Shabbos with the 6 days of the week.

The Gemara states (Beitza 16a) Beis Shamai said from the first day of the week, one should prepare for Shabbos. Indeed, it was said on **שמאי הזקן** that every day he would eat in honour of Shabbos. If he came across a superior animal during the week, he would say that it should be for Shabbos. If he later came across a more superior

animal, he would designate it for Shabbos and eat the first animal during the week (see Mishna Brura 250:2).

At Shacharis when we recite the Shir Shel Yom, we say it in the context of Shabbos- as in **היום יום ראשון בשבת**, one should look forward to the holy Shabbos coming. During the week when one sees delicious food, he should designate it for Shabbos. We should think of ways to make Shabbos special. In this way we can grasp what we say in Shabbos Zemiros, **יום שבתון אין לשכוח**, that even during the week we shouldn't forget this special day.

Rav Ozer Alport - Parsha Points to Ponder



After Miriam's death, the Jewish people complained to Moshe and asked why he had brought them out of Egypt to the wretched desert where they were unable to plant anything (Bamidbar 20:5). At the end of Parshas Shelach, a man was put to death for desecrating Shabbos (Ibid., 15:32-36). According to one opinion in the Gemora (Shabbos 96b), the forbidden labour that he performed was detaching something that was growing from the ground, and according to another opinion, he gathered objects that were growing into a pile.

How can this be reconciled with the people's complaint in Parshas Chukas that nothing could grow in the desert? Additionally, when Miriam died, they had already been living in the desert for more than 39 years. Why were they only moved to lament their inability to plant

at this point in time, especially when many of them were born there and didn't know any other reality? (Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh Bamidbar 15:32)

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh notes that the Torah introduces the episode of the Shabbos desecrator by stating that the Jewish people were in the desert. Why is it relevant to include this seemingly obvious information?

The Torah is hinting to us that during the 40 years that the Jewish people were in the desert, it wasn't an ordinary desert, as the Midrash teaches (Bamidbar Rabbah 19:26) that Miriam's well watered the ground and enabled trees and plans to grow there.

This information is necessary to understand the incident of the Shabbos desecrator, for it was only during the time when the Jews were in the desert that it was possible for him to detach or gather things that were growing there. This also explains why the people suddenly began to complain about their inability to plant in the desert after Miriam died, for the termination of her well made the ground barren for the first time since their arrival 39 years earlier.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

עַל־כֵּ֗ן יֹאמְרוּ֙ הַמֹּשְׁלִ֔ים בֹּ֖אוּ חֶשְׁבּ֑וֹן תִּבָּנֶ֥ה וְתִכּוֹנֵ֖ן עִ֥יר סִיחֹֽן (21:27)

On a literal level, our cumbersome verse discusses the battles between two of the non-Jewish peoples who lived at this time and commemorates the victory of one over the other. However, the Gemora (Bava Basra 78b) reinterprets our verse as coming to teach an important life lesson in values and priorities.

The Gemora explains that the verse can be read as quoting not rulers over kingdoms, but rather rulers over their own base instincts and evil inclinations. What is the message of these masters of self-control? They advise that a person make a reckoning of the reward

for performing a mitzvah versus the loss incurred by doing so, and the potential gain from sinning relative to its downside.

The Gemora concludes that these individuals promise that somebody who makes the appropriate calculation will be built in this world and well-established in the World to Come. While it is certainly understandable that a person who righteously makes such a reckoning will be well-compensated in the next world, in what way does he tangibly benefit from doing so in this world?



Rav Shalom Schwadron was once giving a speech on this very topic when a man approached him at the end of the lecture and related a story which answers our question. The man was an old Russian Jew, and his story took place just before the rise to power of the Communists. At that time, the Jews in Russia felt secure, and the man had a lucrative job in the jewelry business.

One day he was going to work a bit early when he heard somebody calling for a tenth man to complete a minyan so that a person could say the Mourner's Kaddish on the yahrtzeit of one of his relatives. Because he had a few minutes to spare, he agreed to be the tenth man. Much to his chagrin, when he entered the room, he saw only five other men. When he turned to leave, the man with yahrtzeit begged him to stay a few more minutes until the minyan could be completed.

After much time, the real tenth man was found, but the jeweler was fuming at the thought of all of the money he was losing in missed business deals. Still, he assumed that there would be one quick Kaddish and then it would be all over. He was left speechless when

the man with yahrtzeit proceeded to start from the very beginning of the prayer service. As they had only an exact minyan, the jeweler had no choice but to remain hostage, growing more livid by the moment.

When the service was finally over, he angrily ran toward his office. When he got there, he was informed that that very morning the Bolsheviks had attacked and ransacked the building, killing most of the Jews in the process. If he hadn't stayed to allow another Jew to say Kaddish, his kids would be saying Kaddish for him.

Many times in life we are confronted with dilemmas between what we known deep down is the right thing to do and what we want to do to get ahead and have what appears to be more fun in this world. The next time we are faced with such a choice, we should follow the advice of the rulers to make a calculation and to realize that by making the right decision, we stand to gain not only in the next world but also in this one.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל־הָעֵדָה כִּי גָוַע אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבְכּוּ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן שְׁלשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל When Aharon Hakohen was niftar, the entire nation showed an unprecedented outpouring of grief. Rashi explains that this was attributed to Aharon's relationship with the entire nation. He was a man who was a giver. He gave of his time and he gave of his koach and moach to keep peace and break up any discord that arose between friends, family, husbands and wives. There are two types of people in this world. One is a **"נותן"** - a giver, while the other is a **"נוטל"** - a taker.

The optimal relationship of a husband and wife will be realized when both practice the virtue of giving. Then their affection for each other will never cease and their lives will be filled with happiness as long as they live.

R' Eliyahu Dessler zt"l would tell a young couple on their wedding day: Fill your hearts at this moment and remember to give happiness to each other. May this remain fresh in your minds as it is tonight, on your wedding day.

During his entire marriage, R' Dessler used a small silver cup for Kiddush. This was the becher his wife brought with her from her father's home. However, on the Shabbos following his wife's passing, he asked to make Kiddush from a larger becher in accordance with the shiur of the **Chazon Ish**.



He said, "During my wife's lifetime, I made Kiddush on her becher, despite the fact that it was of a lesser size. It was my way of according her respect and honour. Now that she is no longer here, I am certain that she will not take offense and be happy that I'm using a larger becher." What a beautiful way to ensure marital harmony!

Parshah Pearls, Chukas *(based on the Ba'al ha'Turim)*

Chazal have taught us that the Parah Adumah came to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf - 'Let the mother come and wipe up the mess that her baby made' (see Rashi 19:22).

The Ba'al ha'Turim points out that **פרה אדומה בגימטריא זה על עון עגל**

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport - Aharon's Method of Making Ba'lei Teshuva: Smiles not Stones

וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל־הָעֵדָה כִּי גָוַע אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבְכּוּ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל The Avos D'Rav Nasson says that when Aharon died, the Pasuk(*20:29)* tells us that the entire *House* of Israel (implying men and women) mourned. But when Moshe dies, the verse states that the *Children* of Israel (implying the men only) mourned.



The relationship between Klal Yisroel and Moshe Rabbenu was not the same as that between Aharon and Klal Yisroel. Moshe had to give mussar, had to *set the people straight*, had to issue uncompromising judgments.

Aharon, however, never criticized anyone. He was a peacemaker who was beloved by everyone. Aharon would greet wicked people with a smile. He did not spit or throw stones. He said "Good Morning." The response of the wicked, often was, "How can I continue to sin, it will distress Aharon?" The Medrash declares that in this way "he caused many people to repent from doing evil." He caused them to repent, not through anger or disgust, but with Shalom. That is how he was so successful.

Aharon was a lover of peace. How so? One should desire that there be peace between every two Jews just as Aharon loved peace between every two Jews. Thus, it is written (Malachi 2:6), "*The Torah of truth was in his mouth and no injustice was found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and fairness, and he turned many away from sin."* (Avot De'Rabbi Natan ch. 12)

Torah Tavlin - Drush V'Chidush

כ:א-ב וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם ...וְלֹא־הָיָה מַיִם לָעֵדָה



After the death of Miriam the Torah relates, "*There was no water for the nation (to drink),*" as the Be'er Miriam, the well of Miriam, had ceased to provide water. Rashi explains that evidently it was in the merit of Miriam, the sister of Moshe and Aharon, that Klal Yisroel was given the well. Following her death they lost this miraculous source of sustenance.

The Telzer Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Aizik Ausband zt"l** points out that based on the words of Chazal in Bava Metzia (פו:) it would seem otherwise. The Gemara states that it was in the merit of the kindness of Avraham Avinu who graciously offered the malachim to drink when they came to visit him, that his children, Klal Yisroel were also given to drink from this special water source.

If so, how are we to understand this seemingly obvious contradiction? The answer, says R' Aizik, can be explained as follows: **R' Avraham Kagan zt"l**, the son of the holy **Chofetz Chaim zt"l**, once asked his father: "Why is the Torah referred to as 'Toras Moshe' - Moshe Rabbeinu's Torah, when in fact it is really 'Toras Hashem'?"

The Chofetz Chaim responded by quoting a Talmudic dictum: "Though the wine belongs to the owner, the thanks are given to the butler." (Bava Kama 92b).

Indeed, the Torah is Toras Hashem, however we find ourselves connected to the teachings of the Torah through Moshe Rabbeinu, our Rebbi, thus from our perspective we refer to it as Toras Moshe.

Similarly, regarding the Be'er. In truth, the well itself was created in the zechus of Avraham Avinu. Klal Yisroel however only gained access to it through the zechus of Miriam, and ultimately lost it after her petirah.

In every generation, Torah and Mussar is transmitted by exclusive messengers of Hashem and it is through them and in their zechus that we can access these precious gifts

Torah Tavlin

עַל־כֵּן יֵאָמַר בְּסֵפֶר מִלְחֲמֹת ה' אֶת־וָהֵב בְּסוּפָה וְאֶת־הַנְּחָלִים אַרְנֹן



Klal Yisroel sang a special Shirah upon learning of the hidden miracle Hashem did for them, as they passed through the mountains of Arnon. The Amoriyim lay in ambush, hoping to destroy the nation as they crossed the canyon, but instead, Hashem caused the mountains on both sides to come together crushing the would-be attackers and saving the Jewish people.

One of the great Kabbalists of Aram Sova (Allepo, Syria) who emigrated to the Holy Land around the turn of the 20th century, was **Chacham Rabbi Aharon Tawil zt"l**. The Sephardic Tawil family traces their ancestry back to the great Eli Hakohen, the Kohen Gadol who was cursed by a prophet from Heaven that all his male descendants would die before reaching old age and they will be placed in positions subservient to prophets from other lineages. Most of the Tawil family were originally "HaCohen" and they died

young. They were renamed Tawil many years ago by a great Rabbi who blessed them with a longer life expectancy. Tawil means long in Arabic.

Toward the end of his life, he established his residency in Jerusalem and was adored by the community for his scholarship, extreme piety and modesty. He spent his days and nights in the Kabbalah Yeshivah, Shaar HaShamyaim, and received support from that institution as well.

The Chacham was known for his unusually long davening. Long after everyone else in the minyan had finished, Chacham Aharon was still standing ramrod straight, in his customary place, pouring out his heart in prayer. Almost every day, he was the last person to leave the synagogue, as the rest of the congregation had long since finished and left.

Somehow, a local Arab vagrant became aware of the Tzaddik's practice, and he could not contain his innate sense of hostility toward all Jews; perhaps he felt it was his religious responsibility. In this case, he intended to do harm to the venerable Jewish scholar.

For a few days, he watched and plotted. It was obvious that the Chacham would stand in prayer for a very long time, and the Arab decided to kill the Jew as he stood in his place. He relished the revenge he believed he was taking on behalf of his poor Arab brethren. It shouldn't be too hard, he reasoned. On most days, the entire synagogue let out and this rabbi was the only one still inside. It would not be too difficult to enter quietly and shoot the rabbi - who didn't even move a muscle while he stood - with his pistol. Nobody would see him and no one would ever find out who did it.

On the day of action, the Arab hid around the corner, and waited until every last person left the synagogue. He entered a side door cautiously and looked around to make sure there was nobody else there. When he was sure he was alone with the rabbi, he walked quietly to the front of the synagogue and stood a number of rows

behind the spot where Chacham Aharon customarily stood. As usual, he was there, standing straight, eyes closed, lips moving quietly, and his mind was completely focused and absorbed with his prayers. He did not hear a thing, nor did he sense any impending danger. The Arab took out his pistol and cocked it. Still, the Chacham did not move as he obviously hadn't heard a thing. The wicked Arab raised his hand and held the pistol aloft. He squeezed the trigger and a mighty explosion ensued. The bullet propelled forward - but miraculously, it missed its mark!

At the exact moment that the Arab shot his gun, Chacham Aharon began to bow down as he said the words, "Modim Anachnu Lach." Totally oblivious to the gun being held a few feet from his head, he bent his knees and bowed down, giving thanks to his Creator, as the Sages instituted thousands of years ago.

Meanwhile, the Arab fired his weapon and the bullet missed the rabbi's head by literally millimetres. Shocked, the Arab could not believe that the rabbi had escaped death in such amazing fashion. But the sound of the explosion had alerted people and others were entering the synagogue to find out what happened. The Arab had no chance to reload and fire again - and he ran away amazed at how the G-d of Israel always looks out for the welfare of His beloved.

"Tootsie Rolls"

The parsha speaks of the many battles Klal Yisroel fought. As they travelled through the desert, they were confronted by their enemies, time and time again. Tired, thirsty, exhausted from the weary journey through the desert, they had just been attacked and beaten by an implacable foe, Amalek. They cried out to Hashem - they made a vow to the L-rd - and He came to their rescue. Although the Canaanim were powerful, Hashem said, 'Why should I trouble My children to besiege every city?' He gave all the warriors the idea to

leave their cities, and they gathered in one place, where they were slain. (Rashi)

Salvation comes in many forms. It was November 1950, during the coldest winter North Korea had experienced in 100 years. The Korean War was in full force. Allied troops were deployed to help an under armed South Korea fight off powerful North Korean invaders. United Nations troops, which consisted mainly of U.S. Marines, joined forces with a U.S. Army combat team, South Korean Military Police and a detachment of British troops, around 25,000 men altogether. The group was chasing North Korean soldiers out of the Chongjin Reservoir, often referred to as Chosin. But they weren't alone. In an effort to shore up North Korea, China sent 150,000 soldiers to back them up.



The Chinese soldiers arrived and surrounded the allied troops, hoping to isolate and destroy the 1st Marine Division. The Americans saw the odds and thought they were going to die. Not only were the Allies surrounded and outnumbered, but they were also freezing cold. It was cruel, punishing, unforgiving cold, as low as 40 below zero at night. Bulldozers and tanks couldn't move. Fuel lines cracked. Guns wouldn't fire properly. Sweat froze on the men's skin and between their toes. Rations and extra blood for the wounded were frozen solid and rendered useless. They were hungry, tired, frostbitten, and running out of options. Reinforcement troops were needed, but there were none to be had.

Finally, a call went out for more mortar shells - at the very least, let them fight their way out. The code name that had been instituted

for mortar shells was "Tootsie Rolls" - a chewy, chocolate candy that children adore, and their parents abhor!

The problem was that the officer back at command wasn't familiar with this particular code. Upon receiving the urgent request, he allocated an airdrop of the chocolate candy. When the supplies arrived via airdrop, instead of ammunition, the soldiers opened the crates to reveal thousands of frozen Tootsie Roll candies!

Shocked and dismayed - what were they to do? The troops didn't have time to get mad. They needed to get home. Desperate for food, the allied soldiers thawed the candy in their mouths for some quick energy. And then, some ingenious fellow had a great idea - an idea that saved all their lives! Given the sticky properties of the Tootsie Roll candies, it was determined that once defrosted, they could also be used to repair broken fuel lines and bullet holes in equipment! They could mount a counterattack or at the very least defend themselves to whatever degree possible.

With urgent intensity, the men applied the melted candy over a rip or tear and waited a few seconds for it to freeze again. It did just that! Fuel lines were plugged with chocolate, and equipment never tasted better! This was their way out.

For thirteen days, the allied forces at the Battle of Chosin Reservoir refused to give up. The Marines formed a column and marched toward the port city of Hungnam and the Sea of Japan, where other American forces were waiting. For 78 miles, the brave men marched the steep, dangerous road, fighting through ten Chinese infantry divisions.

Fuelled by sheer will, guts, and thousands upon thousands of chewy candy, the men managed to claw their way back from certain doom. One Marine wrote: "By large, Tootsie Rolls were our main diet while fighting our way out of the Reservoir. You can bet there were probably hundreds of thousands of Tootsie Roll wrappers scattered all over North Korea."

While many would hesitate to call the 13-day event a military victory in the traditional sense, the withdrawal is one of the most well-known campaigns in Marine history. There's even a Navy ship named after it. The men, outnumbered and surrounded, managed to not only get to the sea but to slow the progress of the Chinese troops and immobilize several of their divisions. Those unique survivors, who call themselves the "Chosin Few" - owe their lives to ingenuity, grit, and a highly under-appreciated candy.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

אָז יָשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת



In this week's parsha, we read about the second Shira (song) that Bnei Yisroel sang in the desert. The first Shira was sung forty years earlier when they left Egypt, at the Yam Suf. It is now forty years later, when this second Shira was sung.

First of all, the original Shira in Parshas Beshalach begins with the words: "Az Yashir Moshe u'Bnei Yisroel" - Moshe sang with the entire nation. In the second Shira read this week, there is no mention of Moshe's name anywhere in the Shira. What happened to Moshe? Secondly, on the posuk **ותמת שם מרים ולא היה מים לעדה**, Rashi quotes a Gemara **תענית ט.** that the juxtaposition of the death of Miriam and lack of water tells us that for forty years the Nation had water in the zechus of Miriam, who waited for her baby brother Moshe by the side of the water in Egypt. Now that the water had stopped, all

of a sudden Bnei Yisroel started to sing Shira - Thank you, Hashem, for the **באר** (well) that we had for forty years.

Why did they wait so long to thank Miriam - and why only when the water stopped flowing? This is a prime example of how it is our tendency and human nature to take things and people for granted. The people knew what Miriam had done, but only now that she was no longer with them, did they realize what they lost and had not appreciated. Only now did they give hoda'ah and recognition to Miriam Haneviah.

But Moshe Rabbeinu did NOT have to say Shira, because he thanked Miriam every day of his life - for saving his life! It was because of her that he was born, as Chazal tells us (Sotah 12a), and it was because of Miriam that he was saved from the water!

When we have something - parents, friends, etc. - we don't always realize what we have! May we be zocheh to appreciate all the gifts Hashem gives us. May Hashem give us the sechel to appreciate our parents and grandparents to the fullest while we still have them.

Torah Tavlin - וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַסֶּלַע בְּמַטֵּהוּ פַּעֲמָיִם וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם רַבִּים

R' Chaim Tirar zt"l of Chernovitz (Be'er Mayim Chaim) asks - Why did Moshe strike the rock two times? The word **סלע** (rock) spelled out is **סמך למד עין**. The middle letters of each of these three words spells out the word **מים** - water! There is water in a rock!

Thus, the command was **ונתן מימיו** - the rock should give of its water. Moshe hit it twice, thereby knocking off the first and last letters, leaving only the middle letters - allowing the **מים** to flow!"

"To have a relationship with Hashem – You don't have to be perfect – You have to be willing." - Charlie Harary

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיִּבְכּוּ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל 20:29



The Torah tells us that after Aharon's death: "The entire House of Israel wept for him for thirty days." The Medrash notes that in the description of Klal Yisroel's mourning, the people wept for thirty days for both Moshe and Aharon, however, for Moshe it was "Bnei Yisroel" who wept, whereas by Aharon it was "The entire Bais (House) Yisroel."

Indeed, it would appear that Aharon had captured a greater popular appeal. Rashi says: "The entire House of Israel refers to men and women, because Aharon pursued peace and would promote love between husbands and wives who were in a state of disagreement."

The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh adds that the relationship between the people and Moshe was as a leader to his flock. Aharon, on the other hand, was more beloved to them on a personal level since it was he who worked tirelessly to foster Shalom Bayis, peace and good relations in the homes of the Jewish people. He was the **" אוהב שלום ורודף שלום"** - and the people truly adored him.

For this reason, the posuk records the reaction of the people to Moshe and Aharon's deaths in different ways. For Moshe, the nation wept for him; for Aharon "the entire House (Bais) of Israel wept." Since Aharon devoted his lifetime to restoring and repairing the "House" - each individual BAYIS of Klal Yisroel, therefore, the Torah tells us how each BAYIS responded to its loss on a personal level.

Keeping a Jewish BAYIS strong, with peace and harmony flowing is our Nation's strongest asset and the unity of our Nation is wholly dependent on the unity of our homes. If we can get along with those closest to us, surely we can get along with strangers as well!

Aharon Hakohen recognized this and his devotion to it made him our most beloved leader. The Torah begins with the letter **ב** which, when spelled out in full, spells **ב-י-ת** or BAYIS! The fact that Hashem chose to begin the Torah with the letter **ב** is an indication of how important it is.

Let us also make it the most important thing in our lives.

Torah Tavlin

The Rambam writes: "There have been a total of nine red heifers from the time this mitzvah was given until the destruction of the Second Holy Temple. The first was offered by Moshe, the second by Ezra Hasofer, and seven more between the time of Ezra and the destruction. The tenth red heifer will be offered by Moshiach Tzidkaynu.

When a Jew anticipates Moshiach in the proper way - the way the Rambam did - the very mention of the subject will elicit such strong emotion and longing that he will spontaneously cry out, "May he be speedily revealed, Amen, may it be Your will!"

Many of our greatest Gedolim throughout the generations were renowned for their sincere and ever-present longing for Moshiach. Some would prepare special garments that they intended to don in honour of that day; alas, those clothes were never touched, let alone worn, in the tzaddik's lifetime. Others studied tractates that pertained to the future, when the Bais Hamikdash will be rebuilt, and sacrifices will be offered; they wanted to ensure that there will be people capable of performing the Avodah when the time came.



The great Rebbe of Uhel, **R' Moshe Teitelbaum ZT"L** (Yismach Moshe), had his own unique practice. He would never lay down to sleep without preparing his Shabbos finery at the side of his bed, and each night he would remind his trusted attendant that should Moshiach arrive in the middle of the night, he should wake him immediately. His attendant would assent to this request every single night and only then would the Rebbe go to sleep. However, each morning, upon awakening, the Yismach Moshe would groan with disappointment that another night went by and the bitter golus was still upon him, and his longing grew ever stronger day by day.

One Erev Shabbos, R' Moshe was informed that his father-in-law, **R' Aryeh Leib Lipschitz ZT"L, the Viscnitzya Rov**, was to be visiting Uhel and remaining over Shabbos. R' Moshe was excited and waited anxiously all day for his esteemed guest. R' Aryeh Leib, the renowned author of "Aryeh D'vei Elaiy" was not only his father-in-law, but also one of the great Rabbonim of the generation.

It was uncommon for him to leave his kehillah in Poland and travel to Hungary, even for a visit and R' Moshe could not contain his excitement at his good fortune. Not long before Shabbos, though, after R' Moshe had waited the better part of the afternoon, he decided that he couldn't wait any longer and must see to his Shabbos preparations.

Matters at home were quickly seen to and soon R' Moshe headed for the local bathhouse, in order to bathe in honour of Shabbos. His intention was to be as quick as possible and make it back in time to

welcome his esteemed guest. R' Moshe had just begun to wash himself when suddenly from the adjoining room he heard his attendant call out, "Rebbe, he's here! He finally made it!"

In a state of undress and half immersed in bath water, the Yismach Moshe could not believe his ears! He let out a shriek and literally fainted in the tub! The attendant rushed in to assist the Rebbe and managed to revive him.

"Rebbe, Rebbe," cried the attendant, as R' Moshe's eyes fluttered open. "What happened? Why did you faint?" But R' Moshe couldn't speak. His lips were moving and it took sometime before his voice could be heard, even in a low whisper.

"He's here! He's finally here! Moshiach is finally here …. and this is how I look?!"

"Blood Libel"

For centuries, Jews have suffered through some of the worst torture, slander and vilification imaginable, including the infamous "blood libel." One of the most recent stories occurred in 1920, in a little town in Hungary, known as Zembar.

A newly married man moved to the town in search of business prospects and opened a grocery store, which soon took off and became very profitable. The good fortune of this Jew did not sit well with the local priest and schoolteacher and they decided to defame the Jew, or even worse. After a few failed attempts at slander, they felt it was necessary to "up the ante."

One afternoon, a young peasant boy named Gustav was walking home from school when he was abducted and later found murdered. When the police were called in to investigate, they were tipped off to search the home of the Jewish grocer, where they were sure to find evidence - in the form of vials of the boy's blood - stashed away for later use in obscene and horrific Jewish acts of worship.

Yekusiel, the Jewish grocer, heard about the impending scandal and ran for his life. Furtively, he made his way out of town to the home of the great tzaddik, **R' Yeshayale Keresturer ZT"L.**



Pouring out his tale of woe, he described for the tzaddik the situation and the fate awaiting him were he to be caught by the authorities for this crime he did not commit. Surprisingly, R' Yeshayale remained relaxed and in good spirits.

"Don't worry about a thing," said the Rebbe. "Remain here with me for a few days and when I tell you, you can go home and all will be just fine."

With pure emunah in the promise of the tzaddik, Yekusiel stayed in the home of R' Yeshayale for three days. On the fourth day, it was time to go. "Listen to me very carefully and do exactly as I say," said the tzaddik. "Go to the train station and book a first-class berth. Tell the man you wish to get off in Zembar."

Yekusiel protested. "But Rebbe, Zembar is a tiny town. There are no train stops in Zembar." R' Yeshayale waved him off. "Tell him you only want the train that will stop in Zembar. Get off in your town and do not worry about a thing. Hashem will protect you and guard over you."

Yekusiel did as he was told; in his heart, though, he was still unsure. But when he bought a first-class ticket and asked for the train that stops in Zembar, he was given a ticket and directed to a specific train, no questions asked. Encouraged, he alighted the train and took his seat in the nearly empty first-class carriage. The only other

passenger in his carriage, appeared to be a police inspector with a kind face.

All throughout the trip, Yekusiel kept to himself, davening and crying to Hashem to help him out of his seemingly impossible situation. Suddenly, he looked up and noticed the inspector looking at him. "Excuse me, sir," said the man with the kind face, "I couldn't help but notice you were crying."

Throwing caution to the wind, Yekusiel divulged his entire story, including the words of his Rebbe. The inspector smiled and said, "My good man, today is your lucky day! I was sent specifically to the town of Zembar to investigate this crime and prosecute the Jewish grocer who committed it. But after seeing you and hearing your side, I realize that you're telling the truth. This train is making an extra special stop for me in Zembar and you must get off when I do. Allow me to take care of the rest."

When they arrived in Zembar, the inspector dug deeper into the matter and learned of the plot carried out to frame the Jew. Yekusiel was exonerated and returned home to his thankful family.

When someone asked the Vilna Gaon zt'l to explain the trait of Bitachon, the Vilna Gaon responded that Dovid HaMelech already described it with the words אִם־לֹא שִׁוִּיתִי וְדוֹמַמְתִּי נַפְשִׁי כְּגָמֻל עֲלֵי אִמּוֹ כַּגָּמֻל עָלַי נַפְשִׁי (Tehillim 131:2) ***It is to trust in Hashem as an infant relies on its mother.***

The Malbim adds that this signifies a person who places all their reliance on הקב״ה, recognizing their own lack of power and depending entirely on Divine providence, just as a child depends on their mother.

Torah Tavlin

Chacham Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L (Chid'a in Pnei Dovid) would say: אָמַרְתִּי אֶחְכָּמָה וְהִיא רְחוֹקָה מִמֶּנִּי [Koheles 7:23] "*I thought I was wise, but it is distant from me*".



Shlomo Hamelech thought that he would be able to understand the reason for the Parah Adumah, but it was distant and hidden from him. Since the first letters of the words וְלָקְחוּ לַטָּמֵא מֵעֲפַר שְׂרֵפַת הַחַטָּאת [19:17] spell out **ושלמה**, Shlomo thought he could understand this mitzvah. However, the letters in sequence also spell **ולמשה**- as if to say the secret of the Parah Adumah was only revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu."

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

It states (Avos 4:1) **איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו**, who is wealthy? Someone who is happy with his portion."

Rashi writes **בחלקו** means **בחלק** – "the portion Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave him, whether it is good or bad, whether a lot or a little. He accepts everything with a good eye."

A person must be **שמח בחלקו**, happy with his portion.

The brother of the **Maharal zt'l** said that **חלקו** is roshei teivos of **חם לך קר ויבש**, hot, wet, cold, and dry. - One must be happy with whatever Hashem sends his way.

Laws and Customs that Merit a Good Parnassa

Saying Tehillim - Chapter 23 - (Mizmor L'Dovid) in Conjunction with a Meal. The Zohar says that a person should pray for parnassa before he starts a meal. This could be any self-composed tefillah. The Magen Avrohom writes that the custom is to say the perek in Tehillim of "Mizmor L'Ddovid" which is a special chapter pleading for good parnassa and contains 27 words, which is equal to the word זן (He feeds).



Rav Chaim Vital ZT"L says that one who says this tefillah will not lack food. This might mean not ever lacking parnassa in general.

Saying a Dvar Torah During a Meal. The Mishna Berura writes that one who says "Mizmor L'Dovid" after eating the Hamotzie bread also fulfils the obligation of saying a Dvar Torah during a meal with these words.

R' Meir Shapiro ZT"L of Lublin would say:

"After the Parah Adumah was burnt, the posuk tells us running (living) water (**מים חיים**) shall be put on the ashes in a vessel. Water can accomplish great things. It has the ability to flatten mountains, straighten rugged paths, form crevices, and overcome everything which is in its path. But this only occurs when the water is flowing, living. If it is frozen in place, it has no such power.

The same is true of the Jewish people. When they are enthusiastic, inspired and 'alive' they can accomplish anything. But when they are frozen and cold, they become powerless!"

The Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky ZT"L (Kehillos Yaakov) would say:

"Often times, we see a great talmid chacham and tzadik who has come from a very simple home. This is because one of his grandmothers had poured from her heart tears and prayers that her descendants should merit to study Torah. If this did not help for her sons, then it helps for her grandchildren. The first generation thought, on the basis of their near-sighted vision, that her prayers were useless and lost, Heaven forbid.



In the end, though, it became clear that no prayer goes unanswered. If it was not answered immediately, then it will be answered in the time of her grandchildren."

The World to Come

The holy **R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov ZT"L.** had a tremendous desire to know who would be sitting beside him in the World to Come. He prayed for many days that this information be revealed to him from on high. And eventually it was revealed to him that the person who is to sit next to him in Gan Eden, would be a certain individual - Yaakov ben Yosef - who lived far away in a distant village.

This bit of knowledge sparked a curiosity and longing to meet this man. R' Yisroel travelled to the village and made inquiries about a tzaddik by the name of Yaakov ben Yosef, but alas, no one had ever heard of such a tzaddik. At long last, he was told that there was a

Yaakov ben Yosef, but he was no tzaddik - far from it. This Yaakov ben Yosef was instead a rather uncouth woodcutter living on the outskirts of the village.

Well, now the Baal Shem was even more interested in meeting him. He went to his house and asked to meet with R' Yaakov. He did and it was a rather unremarkable encounter.



Now, however, the Baal Shem was certain that Yaakov was a tzaddik concealing his true identity. He remained a bit longer but after spending several days with him, the Baal Shem Tov realized that Yaakov was indeed a crude, ignorant person. And oddly, Yaakov ate tremendous amounts of food. It seemed that he had a ravenous and unsatiable appetite.

Politely, R' Yisroel asked him about this. Yaakov, who all this time had not even realized who is esteemed and holy guest was, shrugged innocently and replied, "My father, of blessed memory, was once traveling to a nearby village together with a number of individuals. Suddenly, the group was attacked by highway bandits. After taking the people's belongings, the bandits chose to make sport of the Jews, and threatened to kill them unless they kissed the crucifix. Many of the people caved into the demands of the bandits, but not my father. He was a very strong man.

He broke off a thick branch and attacked the robbers. He risked his life but would not, G-d forbid, kiss the crucifix." R' Yisroel understood. "Yes, my dear Yaakov, but you haven't answered my question. What does this have to do with your appetite?" Yaakov's face hardened, taking on an expression of serious devotion. "I

realized that I must be very strong so if I am ever challenged to kiss a crucifix, I will be able to defend myself like my father. As a result, I eat to be strong. When I cut down trees, the chopping action makes my muscles strong. No one will ever be able to make me sin against G-d!"

The Baal Shem Tov was awestruck. Now he understood everything. Every bite of food Yaakov took and every move he made with the axe was to cause a Kiddush Hashem - Sanctification of G-d's Name!

Tefilla For Taking Medicine



The Special Prayer of the Gemara. Before taking any medicine or visiting a doctor, it is an obligation for one to say the following tefillah: **יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו שיהי עסק זה לי לרפואה כי רופא חינם אתה** - ***"May it be Your will, Hashem my G-d, that this activity should bring healing to me for You are the One who heals even if I have no merits."***

When reciting this prayer, one should say the name of Hashem properly as he does during davening. If a person takes medicine many times during the course of the day, this tefillah should precede the medicine each time. If a person takes many pills together, one tefillah covers them all. After taking the medicine, or finishing the doctor's appointment, one should then say: **"ברוך רופא חולים"** - ***"Blessed is He who heals the sick."***

It is important that this tefillah should be known by heart or written on a piece of paper and posted some place that he will see it. For some unknown reason this halacha is not well-kept and needs chizuk.

The Slonimer Rebbe ZT"L (Nesivos Sholom) explains that



a Jew must make himself into a king who rules over his inhibitions. The word **מלך** can be used as an acronym for **מח** - Brain, **לב** - Heart, and **כבד** - Liver.

The brain controls one's thoughts and logic, which then rules over a person's heart (emotions) and liver (desires). In this way, he is the **מלך** - the ruler over himself.

If, however, a person allows his emotions to control him, he becomes a **למך** - an expression used for one who is weak. Even worse, though, when his desires overtake him. Then he amounts to **כלם** - literally a nothing, a nobody!

R' Shimon Sofer ZT"L (Michtav Sofer) would say:

"The posuk states: 'Any open vessel with no cover fastened to it is impure.' Every human being is a vessel in the service of Hashem. Thus, he requires a 'head-covering' in order to control the level of outside influence that he allows inside.

The first thing a wayward Jew does **רח"ל** is take off his yarmulke to signify that he is 'free' of conforming to the will of Hashem. A Jew must always 'cover-up' his negative impulses and appreciate the boundaries that our forebearers have provided for us."

The Torah is intrinsically deep; the more one delves into it, the more its depth is revealed. ~ Maharal — Tiferes Yisrael.



When the first World War broke out and the European landscape was set aflame, thousands of panic-stricken refugees from various countries were forced to flee their homes. Many made their way to Vienna, in Austria, which was then a safe haven, far away from the raging battle front.

The holy **Tchortkover Rebbe, R' Yisroel Friedman ZT"L**, was at a spa in a German village when the war began and he too, was forced to relocate to Vienna, together with a large number of his followers. The Viennese community welcomed him with open arms. When the Rebbe arrived in Vienna, he immediately began working to ease the plight of the Jews who had left everything behind to save themselves and their families. He was also very involved in persuading Jews who had lost their way in Yiddishkeit, to return to the fold. He would insist that he was available to assist anyone and everyone.

"This is what I learned from my holy fathers. They took care and worried about those who had fallen by the wayside. Chassidus was founded to help Yidden from all walks of life, and therefore, I must accept upon myself the task of rectifying the broken fences and rebuilding Yiddishkeit in Vienna." During the war, many unfortunate Jews were conscripted into the army where they met their deaths or were badly wounded.

The Rebbe tried to help as many Jews avoid conscription, however, his efforts soon caught the attention of the authorities. They were

not pleased and in order to confirm their suspicions, they dressed up one of their officers as a Jew and sent him to the Rebbe.

The man started to cry, telling the Rebbe that he had only one son who had been called to perform his army service. He begged the Rebbe to have pity on him and help his son evade the army. R' Yisroel listened to the man's story and when he had finished, asked the man to repeat the story.

The man again told over the whole affair, crying bitter tears for his son. When he had finished, the Tchortkover Rebbe asked him to tell over the whole story yet again. When the man finished for the third time, the Rebbe said sternly, "Don't you know that you have to obey the laws of the country? It is forbidden to evade army service!" The man left without another word.

A few days later, a high-ranking officer came to thank the Rebbe for encouraging people to do their army service. They had heard rumours that he was helping people avoid the army, but they were pleased to note that these were not true. The chassidim were convinced that it was only through a miracle - Ruach Hakodesh, perhaps - that the Rebbe had known that the crying man was a disguised officer. But the Tchortkover sought to dispel this "miracle" and explained to them how he had suspected the truth.

"Normally when a Yid tells me his personal sorrows," the Rebbe said, "I am able to feel a portion of his pain and suffering deep inside me. Yet when this man told me his story, his tears did not affect me at all. At first, I thought that it was my fault that perhaps I am not capable of feeling this man's suffering. I decided, therefore, to ask him to tell over his problem again. Perhaps I would then feel part of his pain. I still, however, did not feel touched by his story and I also felt that this man himself was not truly upset by his own problem. I asked him to repeat it a third time and then I noticed that it was indeed as I had thought. The man was not really upset and that was

the reason that I had not been able to feel his pain. I therefore knew that his story was not true and he was lying."

One of the Rebbe's chassidim, who had connections in the army, wanted to be the first to inform the Rebbe that the First World War had ended. On the day the cease-fire was signed, he went to tell the Rebbe the happy news that at long last peace had arrived and the fighting was over.

R' Yisroel, however, showed no joy, and when the chasid displayed his astonishment, the Rebbe told him "The war has not ended. It will only end with the coming of Moshiach!"

The Miracle



One evening, a precocious eight-year-old girl overheard her mother and father talking about her little brother. All she understood was that he was very sick, they were completely out of money and only a very costly surgery could save him now. She heard her father say to her tearful mother with whispered desperation, "Only a miracle can save him now."

She ran to her bedroom and pulled a glass jar from its hiding place. She poured all the change out and counted it carefully. Then, putting the coins in her pocket, she slipped out the back door and made her way to the local drug store. She waited patiently for the pharmacist to notice her, but he was talking intently to another man, not to be bothered by a child at this moment. She cleared her throat loudly. No response.

Finally, she took a quarter from her pocket and banged it on the glass counter. That did it! "And what do you want?" the pharmacist

asked annoyed. "I'm talking to my brother from Chicago whom I haven't seen in ages." "Well, I want to talk to you about my brother," she answered in the same annoyed tone. "He's really sick and .... I want to buy a miracle."

"I beg your pardon?" said the pharmacist. "My brother has something bad growing inside his head," she replied, "and my father says only a miracle can save him now. He needs an operation. But we can't afford it, so I want to use my money. How much would a miracle cost?"

"We don't sell miracles here, little girl. I'm sorry but I can't help you." the pharmacist said, softening a little. But she was not dissuaded. "Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn't enough, I will get the rest. Just tell me how much it costs."

The pharmacist's brother was a well-dressed man. He bent down, smiled, and asked the little girl, "Tell me, how much do you have?" "One dollar and eleven cents," she answered barely audibly, "It's all the money I have, but I can get some more if I need to."

"Well, what a coincidence," exclaimed the man from Chicago. "A dollar and eleven cents - the exact price of a miracle for little brothers." He grasped her hand and said, "Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother. Let's see if I have the kind of miracle he needs."

That well-dressed man was a world-famous neurosurgeon. He performed the operation at no charge and before long, the little brother was home again and doing well.

"That surgery," her mother later said, "was a real miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost?"

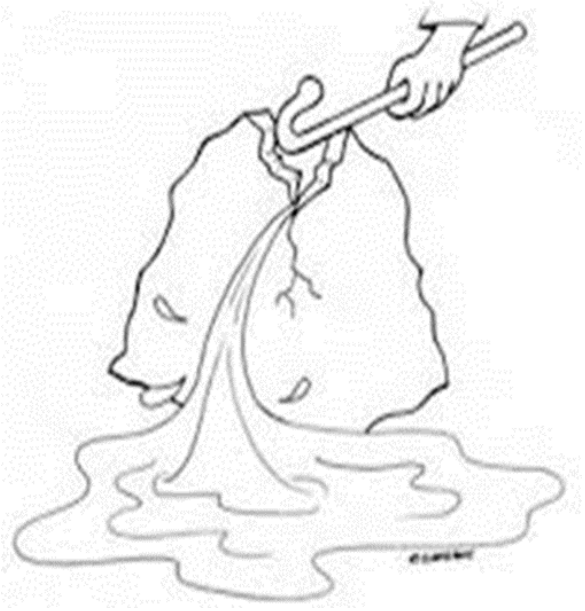
The little girl smiled. She knew exactly how much it cost: one dollar and eleven cents - plus the faith of a young child.

R' Mendel of Vorki ZT"L would say:



"The essence of the Parah Adumah is **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**. Because the Kohen who was involved in the purification process of the Parah, himself becomes impure by the same process that purified the other person. Helping another while losing out oneself - that is the ultimate in loving one's fellow man!"

וַיָּרֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַסֶּלַע בְּמַטֵּהוּ פַּעֲמָיִם



The first time Moshe hit the rock, only a small spurt of water emerged. As a result, he hit it a second time until a huge gush poured forth. (Rashi) Why was it necessary for Moshe to hit the rock - contravening a direct command of Hashem to talk to it - not once, but two times?

Answers **R' Shaul Nathanson ZT"L**, the act of raising his arm to hit was so foreign to Moshe Rabbeinu that in fact, his arm barely responded when he attempted to raise it. Moshe's every limb and bone were so closely attuned to the **רצון ה'** - will of G-d, that it would not perform its owner's will if this was not in exact accordance with the command of Hashem. Thus, his first strike was a light, feeble tap, and a second, forceful attempt was required.

וְלָמָה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהָבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הָרָע הַזֶּה לֹא מְקוֹם זֶרַע וּתְאֵנָה וְגֶפֶן וְרִמּוֹן וּמַיִם אַיִן לִשְׁתּוֹת ***"Why did you have us ascend from Egypt to bring us to this evil place? Not a place of seed, or fig, or grape, or pomegranate; and there is no water to drink!"*** (20:5)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust) writes: There are different opinions as to where Bnei Yisrael obtained wood to build the Mishkan. According to a midrash, Yaakov Avinu brought cedar trees to Egypt and planted them, and he commanded his children to chop down those trees and carry them out when they would leave Egypt.



According to Ibn Ezra and other commentaries, Bnei Yisrael found the trees growing in the desert. Indeed, according to the Ba'alei Tosafot, there were large forests in the desert. This is difficult to understand, writes R' Lewin. First of all, since when do deserts contain forests? Moreover, our verse indicates that *nothing*, not even seeds, grew in the desert?

The answer to this question may be found in the Midrash Shir Ha'Shirim Rabbah, which, commenting on the verse (Shir Ha'Shirim 4:13),**שְׁלָחַיִךְ פַּרְדֵּס רִמּוֹנִים עִם פְּרִי מְגָדִים כְּפָרִים עִם־נְרָדִים** ***"I have sent you a pomegranate orchard with luscious fruit,"*** teaches that, wherever the traveling "Well of Miriam" went, a forest sprouted around it.

Our verse, however, cites Bnei Yisrael's complaint after Miriam passed away and the well disappeared. At that point, it was true that the desert was "not a place of seed." (*Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun*)

Rabbi Y Richtman- The Job of a Tzadik

The Gemara in Moed Katan (28) asks, why does the Torah put the death of Miriam and the mitzvah of Parah Adumah next to each other.



This is to teach us that just as a korban creates a kapara for the person who brings it, so too, the death of a righteous person brings atonement for the whole generation. However, there are many korbanos discussed throughout the Torah. Why does the Torah teach this lesson specifically with the Parah Adumah, why not a chatas or a more common korban?

The Rosh Yeshivah of Ponevezch offers a very nice explanation. All korbanos bring atonement and move the person to teshuvah because they say that everything that is being done to this animal should be done to me. However, a Parah Adumah is completely burned and the only thing that remains is the ashes. With these ashes we are able to make a person tahor. This is an example of complete mesiras nefesh.

The service of a tzadik in this world is the same. They don't leave anything in the world for themselves. They are completely selfless always trying to do for the kahal. This is the connection between Parah Adumah and the death of a Tzadik.

'Never doubt your importance. The world needs exactly what only you can offer.' ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005).

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld – Yeshivas Beis Dovid Trip To Doron's Farm (Transcribed)



This is a most incredible story that just happened last week here on this field. Here you can see behind us is a wheat field.



To harvest the wheat and collect the kernels in order to turn it into flour, they had to bring in someone from Keren HaSheveis this year due to Shmitta, in order to do it according to halacha.

As they were working the field with the combined harvester, they felt a large heavy foreign object. Doron got down to inspect the

problem. They found this huge piece of metal. It was actually a large piece of shrapnel that had come from the "Iron Dome".



This was as we know in use constantly a few weeks ago intercepting many of the rockets that had been fired into Eretz Yisrael. It landed in a field close by. B'chasdei Hashem, it did not explode, ignite, or cause any substantial damage. If it would have done so, it would have burnt the produce of this entire field.



Last Shmitta, Doron decided, that for the very first time, that he would keep the Shemitta cycle. This was an incredible act of mesiras nefesh. He has received much bracha because of this commitment.



However, this year, many of his colleagues for the first time, joined him in keeping Shmitta. Because of this, they were able to see for themselves, this incredible miracle which occurred in their shared ownership field. The entire field was saved!

We see clearly that the Riboino Shel Olam is running the world and is with us all the way. Those people that trust in Him, see the most incredible brochos.



Doron, you should have a lot of brocho and hatzlocho in everything that you do.

(Doron) – Brocho V'Hatzlocho l'kulam!

[Please feel free to contact us how to get involved in all of the Yeshiva's initiatives. The yeshiva puts out many publications, whether it being booklets on the Yomim Tovim, or posters for various occasions. The Rosh Hayeshiva gives a daily Halcha shiur, as well as a Daf Yomi Shiur. Please feel free to check them out on torahanytime.com or on his app; Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld. It is available on the AppStore and GooglePlay.

Donations are welcome on our website at beisdovid.com/donate.]

whY I Matter - Young Israel of Midwood Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld



King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (18:4), **מַ֭יִם עֲמֻקִּ֑ים דִּבְרֵי פִי־אִ֝ישׁ נַ֗חַל נֹבֵ֥עַ מְק֥וֹר חָכְמָֽה** ***"The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the source of wisdom is like a flowing stream."***

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (Spain; died 1263) explains: This verse teaches us that when a person is sitting among a group of people who are conversing, if they are speaking about mundane matters or are exchanging idle words, he should consider their words like a deep well, whose waters are useless to a thirsty person because they are too far away to be reached without a rope and bucket.

On the other hand, if they are speaking words of wisdom or mussar / character improvement, he should drink up their words like a thirsty man at a flowing stream.

זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה' לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־בָּהּ מוּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עֹל "*This is the decree of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, to say: `Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come'.*" (19:2)

The law of Parah Adumah / Red Heifer is regarded by our Sages as the quintessential chok / decree, i.e., a law with no discernible rational explanation. However, there is disagreement about exactly what aspect of Parah Adumah is a chok. It is not the basic mitzvah; our Sages tell us that the Parah Adumah atones for the sin of the Golden Calf. "*Let the mother come and clean up the mess that her calf made,*" our Sages say. [Understood simply, the sin of the Golden Calf brought death to the Jewish People, while the Red Heifer cleanses man of the impurity of death.]



R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (rabbi of Brody, Galicia; died 1869) suggests that the chok is contained in our verse. "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take to you-i.e., to Moshe – a completely red cow." Why should the Parah Adumah be Moshe's?

Indeed, there is an opinion in the Gemara which states that each Parah Adumah in history was prepared only by someone who first was sprinkled with the ashes of Moshe's Parah Adumah.

Of all of the Jewish People, Moshe seemingly was the one who least needed atonement for the Golden Calf! This is the mystery of the Parah Adumah. *(Kohelet Yaakov: Drush Heh Le'Parashat Parah)*

Kotzker Rebbe: "Man Is Like an Earthenware Vessel - His Value Is Not Based On Externals"-Rav Yissochor Frand

At the time of the Temple, there was a way of purifying oneself from Tumas Meis, through the Parah Adumah. Today, unfortunately, we don't have the Parah Adumah and we are all Tomayei Meisim. In the course of the discussion of Tumas Meis, the Torah alludes to other discussions of Tumah v'Tahara. One type of Tumah is that of Keylim – vessels.

There are two types of vessels that have two different sets of Tumah laws: There are metal utensils (kli matches) which become Tameh from outside contact with sources of Tumah. There are also earthenware vessels (kli cheres), which only become Tameh from the inside.



In the case of the earthenware vessels (kli cheres), actual contact between the vessel and the Tumah is not needed. Even if a sheretz is suspended inside the kli cheres, the utensil becomes tameh.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l, explains the difference: Metal itself is a precious commodity. Therefore as soon as contact is made — even on the outside — it becomes tameh.

An earthenware, kli cheres, however, is made from material that is almost valueless. The whole value and importance of the vessel is determined by its functionality — what it can contain. Therefore the vessel can only be made impure by **attacking** its functionality — from within the walls of the vessel.

The Kotzker declares that people can also be compared to earthenware vessels. Man's value is not based on his component elements and minerals. The value of these elements is negligible. The value of a human being is based on what is inside.

Sometimes we make the mistake of getting so caught up in the **chitzonius** of human beings — how they dress or what kind of car they drive — that we forget this lesson. The value of a human being is like that of a kli cheres — it is based on the internals. Just as that which is put inside the earthenware vessel can be metameh it, so too, the thoughts and desires that are put into a human being can sometimes be metameh the person.

The value of a person is not based on what's **bachutz** but on what's **bifnim**. We must be very thoughtful and careful about what we put into both our **keilim** and our children's **keilim**.

Aharon's Death Triggers Even Greater Emotions Than Moshe's Death



Aharon loved and pursued peace. Chazal consider this a very important concept. The Yalkut Shimoni says that when it came time for Aharon to die, G-d, kaviyachol, did **not have it within Him** to go to Aharon and tell him directly that his time was up. G-d had to ask Moshe Rabbeynu a ***favour*** to tell Aharon to go up to his place of death.

Rav Bergman, in his sefer, Shaare Orah, points out that there is no such teaching when it was time for Moshe Rabbeynu to die. Nowhere do we find that G-d was **embarrassed** to tell Moshe Rabbeynu that

the time had come for him to leave this world. In what way was Aharon superior?

Rav Bergman suggests it was Aharon's attribute of being the pursuer of peace among the Jewish nation that gave him this special status.

Departure of Israel's Peace-maker Triggers Attack

In this week's parsha the Torah relates the death of Aharon haKohen. The verse states that the Cannanite King had been afraid to start up with Israel until this point. But now he heard something (Vayishma haCannani…) that caused him to wage war with Israel.

The Talmud in tractate Rosh Hashannah explains that what he heard was that Aharon haKohen had died. Aharon's death caused the Clouds of Glory to depart. The Cannanite King took this as a signal that permission was given to wage war against Israel. What was it about the loss of Aharon that now made the Jewish people vulnerable to attack from their enemies?



Aim at friendship not enmity

The Ateres Mordechai quotes a chazal: Aharon haKohen was a Rodef Shalom, who preserved peace in Klal Yisroel. Once Aharon was gone, machlokes began, people fought among themselves, and Bnai Yisroel became vulnerable to attack from outside.

The Ateres Mordechai connects this idea with the verse in parshas Lech-Lecha: "There was a quarrel between the shepherds of Avram and the shepherds of Lot. And the Cannani was then in the land."

What is the significance of the "Cannani was then in the land?" This, notes the Ateres Mordechai, is the same idea that we find here in

our parsha: As long as there was peace between the shepherds of Avram and Lot, their unity was a guarantee of protection from external enemies; but as soon as quarrels broke out, then there was a cause for worry about the Cannani being in the land.

When there are quarrels among the Jewish people, they become vulnerable to attack from external enemies.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky on Chukas - Dvar Torah from Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l, - Save me a Seat



Parshas Chukas discusses one of the most complex and problematic occurrences in the Torah - the story of Moshe Rabbeinu hitting the rock. After Miriam passed away, the well, in her merit, dried up, leaving the Jews without water. The Jews quarreled with Moshe, saying "If only we had died like our brothers, who were punished by a plague! Why did G-d bring us to this barren desert to die of thirst?"

Moshe then beseeched Hashem, who instructed him to take his stick and talk to the rock, and it will bring forth its water. But the question remains. Earlier, in Parshas Beshalach, Hashem instructed Moshe to hit the rock. Why does Hashem tell Moshe now to talk to the rock?

Silas Aaron Hardoon, a wealthy Jewish businessman, lived in Shangai China at the turn of the century. The story is told that his father came to him in a dream and instructed him to build a synagogue for

the Jews of Shanghai. He embraced this project, and in 1927, he completed the construction of a massive edifice, the Beth Ahron Synagogue, named for his father. The sanctuary was so large that its 400 seats dwarfed the community it served, and the building was underused for some time.

In 1941, through a miraculous string of events, the Mir Yeshiva, along with some small groups from other yeshivos, were able to escape Europe, and after a stop in Kobe, Japan, settled in Shanghai, China. When they arrived, they sought a place of worship to house the hundreds of students and faculty. They settled into the Beth Ahron Synagogue, and realized the divine planning of the building, as the 400 scholars filled every seat in its great sanctuary!

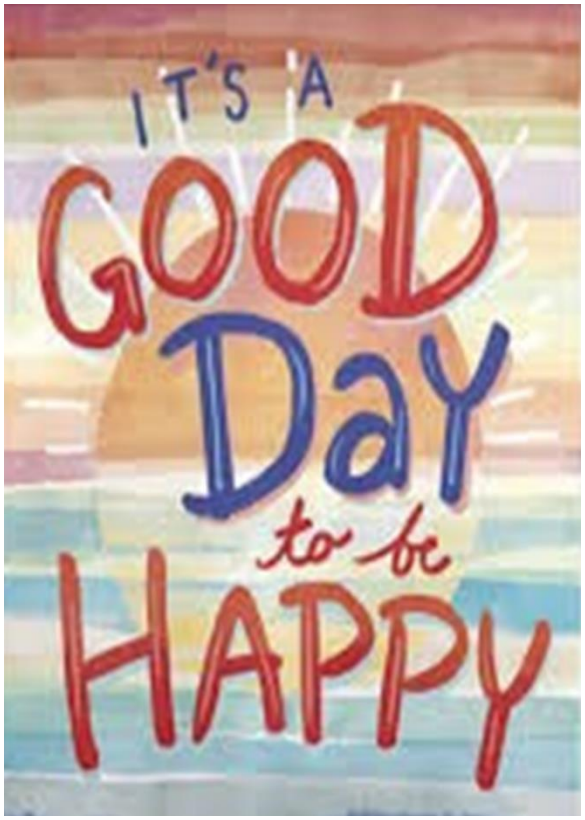
My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky would quote an explanation from **Rabbi Samson Rephael Hirsch, zt"l**. The Jews complained to Moshe as if Hashem had taken them out of Egypt and led them into a desert without a plan of survival! They actually claimed that G-d brought them into the desert to kill them, as there was no water in the desert since the well had dried up.

Hitting a rock is a severe action. This would be naturally interpreted by the Jews that the rock was dry until now, and Moshe would actually produce water from the rock, solidifying their theory, that G-d did not have a plan to properly hydrate His nation!

Thus, Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to the rock. Speaking would portray the reality of the situation. Hashem had everything planned and prepared. The water was already there, waiting to gush forth. All Moshe had to do was talk, and it will come. Moshe missed this opportunity, and the Jews did not properly learn this lesson.

We must remember that although sometimes the situation looks bleak, but Hashem has the solution prepared beforehand – even to make sure there's enough seats.

Jewish Education Program Queens - Be Happy With What You Have While You Have It!



וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־הָעֵדָה מִדְבַּר־צִן

"All the Jewish People arrived at the wilderness of Tzin…. Miriam died there and was buried there…" (Bamidbar 20:1)

Reuven and Sara Shapiro were brother and sister. Reuven was 11 years old and Sara was 9. Early one morning they were awakened by the sound of their doorbell ringing. They ran to their bedroom window to see who was at the door. A truck driver looked up and told them that he had a delivery for them. Reuven and Sara noticed that his truck had huge pictures of cookies and doughnuts on it. They ran down and opened the door. [I always warn the children that in real life, they should never open their door for a stranger].

The driver returned to his truck and brought in boxes and boxes, which he put down in the living room. Reuven and Sara started opening the boxes. They could not believe what they were looking at. There were doughnuts of every flavour along with all varieties of cookies, cakes, and pies. They called all their friends to join them in eating these yummy desserts. They shared it throughout the day.

Early the next morning, they were awakened by the sound of a doorbell ringing. They ran to their bedroom window to see who was at the door. A truck driver looked up and told them that he had a delivery for them. Reuven and Sara noticed that his truck had huge pictures of games and electronics. The driver brought in boxes and boxes, which he put down in the living room. Reuven & Sara opened

boxes full of the latest board and electronic games. They called all their friends to play with all the games. Meanwhile, they finished eating the delicious cakes from the day before.

The next morning, the same thing happened. This time the truck driver delivered different flavours of ice cream together with frozen desserts. The routine repeated itself for two weeks. Each day, Reuven and Sara excitedly opened their front door. Two weeks later, Reuven had some friends sleeping over at his house. Early the next morning, the doorbell starting ringing. Reuven & Sara heard it and turned over in bed. Reuven's friends went to the window and saw the truck outside. When they told Reuven, he yawned and told them to have the driver put the boxes in the living room.

What happened? Why weren't Reuven & Sara excited about the delivery this time? The answer is that they were already used to it coming. They expected it. Therefore, it was no longer special.

Hashem delivers the greatest gift to us every single morning. Hashem gives us life, by returning our *neshama*, our soul daily.

We should be excited beyond belief, every morning. We should thank Hashem with excitement, each time. But many of us do not. Why? We are used to it. We expect it. It is not new to us, so the excitement has worn off.

The Jewish People, in the desert, had their needs miraculously taken care of. For forty years they received water daily, via a well that travelled with them. Three million people and their animals had their needs taken care of. Yet, not once in those 40 years does the Torah record that they showed appreciation for the miraculous well (**Kli Yakar** Bamidbar 21:17).

Furthermore, the Torah tells us (Bamidbar20:1) that Moshe's sister, Miriam died. The very next *pasuk* says that the Jewish People no longer had water. **Rashi** connects these 2 *psukim*, teaching us that the well which supplied water for these 40 years was in the merit of

Miriam. When Miriam died, the well no longer provided the Jewish People with water.



The **Kli Yakar** asks why the well stopped supplying water. He answers that it was as a punishment for the Jews' lack of appreciation for Miriam. They did not fully appreciate her for the great person that she was and for the great merit that she had earned.

The **Kli Yakar** says, the Jews did not eulogize Miriam properly and her memory was quickly forgotten. [After Moshe and Aharon died, it says that the Jewish People cried. It does not say that after Miriam's death.] As a result, the water stopped flowing. Then the Jewish People realized Miriam's greatness and that they had received this miraculous source of water only in her merit.

When things are going well, we may tend to take these blessings for granted. We may not fully appreciate our good fortune, as we come to expect it. We may not thank Hashem, as we should, for each kindness that He bestows upon us. Sometimes, only after the blessing is taken away, do we fully appreciate it, retroactively. This trait of not fully appreciating what we have also applies to our relationships with people. Sometimes we do not fully appreciate our loved ones until they are no longer with us.

Be happy with what you have while you still have it! Do not wait until it is gone to appreciate it. Constantly thinking about all the good that Hashem does for you will help you to value it and not take it for granted. Also, do likewise and appreciate your loved ones while they are still with you.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Derech Eretz Moves Mountains!



וְאֶשֶׁד הַנְּחָלִים אֲשֶׁר נָטָה לְשֶׁבֶת עָר וְנִשְׁעַן לִגְבוּל מוֹאָב "***The outpouring of the rivers when it veered to dwell at Ar, and leaned against the border of Moav." (Bamidbar, 21:15)***

Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spector was one of the most famous Rabbis and Talmudic sages of the 19th century. One day when he was busy in his study, one of his students knocked on the door to tell him that his student, Yaacov, had been excused from the army draft. Rabbi Spector had been anxiously awaiting the news whether or not his student would be conscripted into the Russian army.

He heartedly thanked the bearer of the good news. A few minutes later, another student knocked on the door with the same message. Rav Yitzchak Elchonon did not want to tell him that he already knew because he wanted the boy to feel joy of being the bearer of good news. He excitedly thanked this second boy. A few minutes later another student knocked on his door. Again, Rav Yitzchak Elchonon expressed his great happiness at hearing the good news. In this way he made this student too, feel that he was the only one informing him of the good news. This is an example of Derech Eretz.

The Jews were on their way to enter the Land of Israel. They reached the territory of the Emorim. **Rashi** says that the Emorim planned a surprise attack to annihilate all the Jews. The Jews had to pass through a very narrow valley between two mountains that were quite close to each other. The Emorim concealed themselves in

mountain caves. They planned to shoot arrows and hurl stones at the Jews as they passed in the very narrow valley below. The Jews would be helpless against them.

As the Jews approached the valley, the mountain on the Emorite side (which later became part of Eretz Yisroel) started moving. It moved toward the other mountain until it was pressed against it. Jagged rock formations from that mountain entered perfectly into the caves of the other mountain, crushing all the Emorite soldiers. The Jews were unaware of the danger that they had been saved from. When the Jews passed the area, the mountain that had moved returned to its original position.

Hashem wanted the Jews to appreciate the great miracle that He had done to save their lives. Hashem sent the well of Miriam to flow through the valley and carry the blood and smashed limbs of the dead Emorites to the encampment of the Jews. When the Jews realized the great miracle that had saved their lives, they sang a song of praise to Hashem.

Why did the mountain on the side of Eretz Yisroel move? Rashi compared it to a maidservant who upon seeing her mistress, rushes to great her. When the mountain saw the Jews, the true owners of Eretz Yisroel, approaching, it humbly moved towards them. When the Jews passed on, the mountain returned to its original place.

The **Sifsei Chachamim** asks, Why didn't the mountain move back immediately after killing the Emorites, allowing the Jews to see Hashem's miracle right away? Why did the mountain wait until the Jews passed through before it moved back? We know that Hashem does not do any unnecessary miracles. Had the mountain moved back immediately, Hashem would not have needed the additional miracle of having the well of Miriam flow through the valley to bring the Emorite remains to the Jewish encampment.

The **Sifsei Chachamim** answers that a servant who goes to greet his master does not return to his place until his master passes out of

his sight. Thus, the mountain of Eretz Yisroel waited until the Jewish people, its "master", was out of sight before returning to its place.

The **Sifsei Chachamim** is teaching us a very important lesson in derech eretz, respectful conduct. Hashem performed an extra, "redundant" miracle for the mountain in order to show proper derech eretz for the Jewish people.

Acting like a mensch precedes our Torah learning. The **Rabbeinu Yonah** explains that having derech eretz helps one **attain** and **retain** his Torah learning. The **Sefas Emes** (Mishpatim 12) says that the mitzvos between man and his fellow man, ones' behavior to his friend, is part of the Oral Torah that Hashem gave us. Furthermore, we merit Torah on a level commensurate with the refinement of our middos. The Torah learning then helps one to achieve a higher level of refinement in middos, which in turn helps one to achieve an even higher level of learning. This cycle continues.

We must always act with derech eretz, proper and refined conduct. It is more than just being nice. It is a Torah obligation.

Rabbi Y Richtman- All from Hashem

The Sfas Emes asks, if the purpose of the copper snake was to remind people to look up at the sky and remember Hashem, why did there need to be a copper snake in the first place? Why didn't Hashem simply command the nation to look up at the sky to be healed?

The Sfas Emes explains, Hashem wanted there to be a physical substance, and at the same time people should realize that it is Hashem who is healing them and not the snake.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

For Want of a Nail the Kingdom was Lost



וְלֹא־הָיָה מַיִם לָעֵדָה וַתֵּאָסֶף עָלֵיהֶם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם...

"Miriam died and was buried there. There was no water for the people". (Bamidbar 20:1-2)

There is a 13th century proverb:

For want of a nail the shoe was lost,
for want of a shoe the horse was lost,
for want of a horse the knight was lost,
for want of a knight the battle was lost,
for want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
So a kingdom was lost—all for want of a nail.

During 40 years of wandering in the desert, the Jews had ample water. Three million people and their animals were miraculously provided with enough water to satisfy their daily needs. The water came from a rock which was known as the Well of Miriam since the well was in Miriam's merit. When Miriam passed away the well hid amongst other rocks.

Without their source of water, the Jewish people felt as if they were dying of thirst. It reached the point that they actually quarrelled with Moshe. Hashem told Moshe to find **the** Rock, speak to it, and it would once again provide a miraculous quantity of water.

We all know what happened then. Moshe spoke to the wrong rock and nothing happened. When he found the correct rock, he hit it (which he wasn't supposed to do) twice and then the water started gushing. Hashem told Moshe, because you did not bring about a proper sanctification of My Name, you will be punished and will die before entering the Land of Israel. Had Moshe entered the Land of Israel, the Temple would have been built, Mashiach would have come, and we would have never been exiled. All the tragedies of Jewish history would never have occurred.

This whole progression started because the source of water disappeared. Why did it disappear?

The *Kli Yakar* explains that the Jewish people were being punished for the infraction of not expressing enough sadness upon the death of one of their leaders, the righteous Miriam. Although they felt sad, they didn't express it in a torrent of tears, which they did upon the deaths of their other leaders, Moshe and Aharon. Look at the progression of events that followed from this ("For want of a nail the shoe was lost"). One infraction "snowballed" and changed the course of Jewish history.

We must be "Thinking People", constantly evaluating and re-evaluating our actions. Are we doing the right thing? Are we showing proper sensitivity to others? What does Hashem expect us to do in any given situation? We can't act blindly and say that it's not such a big deal-we don't know if it will begin a progression of events that will "snowball". We don't want the "kingdom to be lost—all for want of a nail".

Similarly, with a small gesture a "Thinking Person" can bring happiness to others. A smile or kind word, or just listening to a person who needs a good listener, can "snowball" into something beautiful and special.



The Torah says, **זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ד׳ לאמר**. Why does the Torah say **חקת התורה**, and not **חקת הפרה**, or **חקת הטהרה**? These pesukim are speaking about parah adumah, not about the entire Torah.

The Or HaChaim answers, "It says **חקת התורה** to hint that if Yidden will keep this mitzvah, although it is a **חוק** and we don't know the reason, it is considered as though they kept the entire Torah **אשר צוה ד׳ לאמר** – that Hashem commanded.' Because keeping a mitzvah without [knowing the] reason shows man's emunah, and his desire to keep all of the Creator's mitzvos…

Tefilah B'tzibur

I heard the following story from the children of Reb Nechemya Becker z"l of Yerushalayim. After Reb Nechemya's oldest child was born, his wife became ill. The doctors said that it was pikuach nefesh, and she urgently needed an operation. They also told him that after the operation she wouldn't be able to have any more children.

Reb Nechemya travelled to the **Chazon Ish** in Bnei Brak, to ask him whether he should agree to the operation or not. He arrived just as the Chazon Ish was washing his hands for Minchah. Reb Nechemya said, "I have a question related to pikuach nefesh," so the Chazon Ish immediately gave him his full attention. "The doctors say that my wife needs an operation. It is pikuach nefesh, but then she will not have more children…" "If its pikuach nefesh, what's the question?" the Chazon Ish replied.

Then, the Chazon Ish asked him, "Did you daven Minchah yet?" "No, I haven't." "Daven with us."



After Minchah, the Chazon Ish called Reb Nechemya over and asked him to repeat his question again. The Chazon Ish listened to the question once again, and this time he advised not to do the surgery. "But just before the Rav told me to do the operation because it is pikuach nefeseh?" "That's what I answered before Minchah. And this is what I answer after Minchah." Reb Nechemya returned to Yerushalayim and told the doctors that the Chazon Ish advised against the surgery. The doctors made fun of him and they ridiculed the Chazon Ish, who wasn't a doctor, for mixing into their business.

A couple of days later, Mrs. Becker came down with an infection. The doctors admitted that if they would have performed the operation, her life would be in grave danger. She lived more than eighty years, and bore eight more children. Everything changed because of one Minchah. This is what can be accomplished by a Minchah, and especially a Minchah b'tzibur.

As you go through life, love your wife more than yesterday, but never as much as tomorrow. Make sure your marriage is always growing and improving day by day."

Emunah



We must know that acquiring emunah isn't a task that is accomplished in a day. Gradually, and daily, one needs to increase and improve his level of emunah.

Parents took their child to an orthodontist. The orthodontist said, "You will need to wear braces for a year, and then your teeth will be aligned and straightened out."

The child replied, "I don't have patience for this long-term remedy. Why don't you just tighten the braces some more, so they will straighten out my teeth in a day?"

The orthodontist replied, "If I would do that, you won't have any teeth left. They will all fall out. The only way to do this is gradually."

After a month of wearing the braces, the child may ask, "Why do I need to wear these braces? A month passed and I don't see any improvement." The orthodontist will answer, "Your teeth are improving all the time, only it isn't noticeable yet. Keep wearing the braces, and after a year is up, you will see just how much the braces helped you."

The same is with acquiring emunah and all aspects of avodas Hashem. The improvement is gradual and slow and barely noticeable. But if we will keep it up, we will see with time that we've indeed made significant strides in attaining emunah, middos improvement, and any other area of avodas Hashem that one seeks to improve in. The way for emunah to grow is step by step.

Rabbi Yossi Goldberg - "From Hashem, With Love"

וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נְחַשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת 21:9 ***Moshe made a snake out of copper***



When Klal Yisroel complained about the lack of food and water, Hashem punished them by sending them dangerous snakes. Moshe then made a copper snake and placed it on a pole and held it up high for all to see. If a Yid got bitten by a snake, he just had to look up at the snake that Moshe was holding, and he would then be healed from the bite.

About this the Gemara asks, is a copper snake really able to heal a snake bite? Of course not! So how did it help to look up at Moshe's pole? The Gemara explains that it was 'when Klal Yisroel looked up to the heavens and they reaffirmed their loyalty to their father in heaven' that they were healed.

The Maharal asks, if so, why did Moshe even bother with the snake and the pole? He should have just told Klal Yisroel directly that to be saved from the snake bite one should look up to Hashem!? The point of the pole explains the Maharal, was to attract their attention and force them to look upwards. This was far more effective than if had Moshe simply told them to do so.

"But why put a copper snake on top the pole?" asks the Maharal further. That was so that Klal Yisroel would be most sincere in their Teffila. The sight of the snake would cause them to daven better to Hashem that He should get rid of the real snakes.

But now the question is, if Hashem wanted to punish the Yidden with snakes, why did He advise Moshe of a way how to stop the snakes

from causing death? Hashem was punishing the Yidden and at the same time He was showing them their salvation. He instructed Moshe to perform this act so that Yidden should be encouraged to do Teshuva and look up at Him.

We can see from here that even at a time of punishment, Hashem's love for the Yidden is so strong. Perhaps this is the depth behind the Gemara above. It was only once that Klal Yisroel looked up that they realised how much their Father in heaven truly loves them and this encouraged them to do Teshuva.

This is a very important concept as one goes through life. When things don't work out and one's vision becomes cloudy; look for the silver lining in the cloud. Look for the small, good bits, the expressions of love, from Hashem. Realise that He is after all our loving father in heaven who only wants the best for us.

As we move into this month of Tamuz, let's remember what Chazal tell us about the Churban Beis Hamikdosh. As incredible as it sounds – the Churban too was an act of love, "He vented His anger on sticks and stones, so not to vent it on Klal Yisroel themselves". The destruction of the Beis Hamkidosh is a cause of great mourning. But alongside, we can appreciate the endless and unconditional love that Hashem has for us and how far He will go to protect us and to show us his love even at times of punishment. It's a type of Ahavas Chinom; not because we deserve it.

If we learn from this greatness of Hashem and we too try to show others our Ahavas Chinom, then we can hope for the third Beis Hamikdosh to be rebuilt speedily in our days.



'Even if our good deeds were as numerous as grains of sand by the sea. They wouldn't equal even one of the many kindnesses that Hashem bestows upon us.' ~ Sefer Chovos Halevovos



Tefilah B'tzibur

All of our tefillos are effective, but we should take advantage of the special moments– times of eis ratzon– because then our tefillos have extra power. The Gemara teaches, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu never despises the tefillah of a congregation [tefillah with a minyan]" (Brachos 8).

The Beis Ahron taught, " Of this, I am certain: Tefillah b'tzibur helps for all matters. Tefillah b'tzibur is as powerful as the tefillah of the greatest tzaddik."



The Rebbe of Radishitz zy'a taught that tefillah with a minyan is mesugal for parnassah and for refuah. When one davens with a minyan, the passuk promises, **ובירך את לחמך ואת מימך והסירתי מחלה מקרבך** - he will earn parnassah and refuah.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

וימת אהרן שם - רבינו אפרים ***And Aharon died there*** 20::28

וימת אהרן שם is the same Gematria as **מלמד כי מת בנשיקה** – "Aharon died with a kiss from Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Eis Ratzon



There are other times of eis ratzon, auspicious times, for tefillah. We will discuss three of them. **Reb Shimshon of Ostripoli zt'l** said, "There are three times that are mesugal for the tefillos to be answered: [1] when the aron kadosh is opened, [2] by hagbah (when the Torah scroll is opened and raised before the congregation) and [3] by nesius kapayim (duchenen/birchas cohanim). Whatever one asks for at these times will certainly be answered."

The Zohar tells us, "When the sefer Torah is taken out to be read, the gates of heaven, the gates of compassion, open. Love is aroused in heaven. At this time, one should say the tefillah **בריך שמיה דמארי עלמא** . The second eis ratzon, mentioned by Reb Shimshon Astropolia is by hagbah, when the Torah is raised and shown to the congregation. It is said that the **Arizal** would look at the letters of the sefer Torah by hagbah, "and he would say that when a person comes up close and looks at the letters, until he is able to read them clearly, it will bring a great light on him" (Shaar Hakavanos).

The Seder HaYom writes, "When the Torah is raised for hagbah, everyone should look at it and bow, each person from his place, towards the sefer Torah, and each person should pray to Hashem according to his abilities… If he didn't say **בריך שמיה דמארי עלמא** when the Torah was taken out of the ark, he should say it now by hagbah." The third eis ratzon mentioned by Reb Shimshon Astropolia, is by birkas cohanim.

The Midrash says, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Ahron and his children to bless the Jewish nation, the Jewish nation replied, 'Ribono shel Olam… we only want Your brachos. We want to be

blessed from Your mouth…" They didn't want to be blessed from cohanim; they wanted Hashem's blessing. "Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, 'Although I told the cohanim to bless you, I will stand with them and bless you. The cohanim raise their hand, and this implies that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is standing behind them… looking through their fingers, and He says, **ואני אברכם** -*I bless them.*

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

וכל כלי פתוח אשר אין צמיד פתיל עליו טמא הוא Any open vessel that has no cover fastened to it is impure. (19:15)



The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l, states that a person is like an earthenware vessel, as we say in our Tefilos on Yomim Noraim, **משול כחרס הנשבר** – we are *"Compared to a broken earthenware vessel".*

The Torah states: "Any open vessel" – if the mouth of a person is open, "that has no cover fastened to it" – there is no lock on the person's mouth, meaning he says whatever he wants whenever he wants, then – "it is impure" – the impurity enters within him and contaminates him. (*Yechi Reuven*)

Learning from Every Person

'A wise person learns from every individual he encounters and corrects his own deficiencies by observing their virtues.' ~ Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Jump into the Holiness

Before offering the sacrifices on the mizbeiach, the cohanim would wash their hands and feet by the kiyor. It seems that the most ideal place for the kiyor is near the mizbeiach, so the cohanim could wash their hands and feet and go straight to the mizbeiach. However, the Torah says that the kiyor was situated past the mizbeiach. The cohen had to pass the mizbeiach, wash his hands and feet there, and then return to the mizbeiach to bring the korbanos.

The Shem MiShmuel derives from this a lesson in teshuvah. Some people think that they must do teshuvah before doing anything holy. They think it's improper for them to learn Torah and do mitzvos when they have sins on their hands.

They have a valid point; however, if a person will wait until he is pure from sin, he may never get there. One needs the Torah and mitzvos to help him on his path of teshuvah. Therefore, the Torah tells us that the cohen went deep into the Beis HaMikdash and washed his hands and feet there. Washing signifies repenting and improving one's ways. The cohen goes deep into the kedushah, and that's where he washes himself. Similarly, one should first jump into Torah and mitzvos, and from that exalted place, repent for the past.

This lesson can also be derived from the halachos of parah adumah. First one fills a utensil with water, and then he puts the parah adumah's ashes into the water. The water represents holiness, the ashes, sin.

Don't deal with the sins, and don't try to correct them before you fill yourself up with holiness. First fill the cup with water — that's Torah and mitzvos; and then put in the ashes — which symbolizes repentance.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



The Chazon Ish writes that one can Daven to Hashem in any language in which he is comfortable, and he should Daven to Hashem "as one speaks to his friend." One can talk to Hashem on a moment-to-moment basis, in any language, and without any formal preparations (Kovetz Igros 2:2; Mesilas Yesharim 19). Whatever one is doing, the time can be used to have a conversation with Hashem.

Rebbetzin Shoshana Aliza Zilberstein, the daughter of **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv**, and the wife of **Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein**, was once at home when a neighbour came to ask her a question. The neighbour was about to knock on the door when she heard the Rebbetzin speaking to someone. Not wanting to disturb, the neighbour left. Fifteen minutes later the neighbour returned, and again she heard the Rebbetzin talking to someone. The neighbour waited a few more minutes until the conversation stopped. Finally, she knocked.

Rebbetzin Zilberstein opened the door, and the neighbour was surprised to see that the Rebbetzin was alone. The friend said, "I thought I heard you talking to someone, but perhaps you were having a conversation on the phone." The Rebbetzin explained that she wasn't on the phone, but she had just finished Davening.

It turned out that when the Rebbetzin Davened, she spoke to Hashem with ease, simplicity, and directness, as one would speak when talking with a friend!

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk- Rabbi Michael Skobac

That Ain't No Bull!



We learn from the mitzvah of the red cow (Para Aduma) a lesson in human relations. One irony of the red cow procedure is that it purified the impure but it also made impure the clothing of the Kohain who performed the procedure. Afterward, the Kohain would have to immerse them in a mikva for ritual purification. We learn from this irony that we must do chesed - kindness for others, even when it causes us a loss of time or money. The Kohain sacrificed his own ritual purity for the benefit of another.

The same way, must we all sacrifice ourselves to do chesed/kindness for others. If we seek always to do kindness for others, then HaShem will surely do kindness with us, because the Mishnah in Sotah (1,7) teaches us that H-shem relates to us, based on the way we relate to others.

On the udder hand…

"This is the statute/decree/law (chukat) of the Torah...and you shall take to you a red cow..." (Numbers 19:2) Why is the ritual of the red cow, used to purify those who had come into contact with a corpse, referred to as the law of the Torah. Shouldn't it have been called the law of the red cow or the law of purification?

There was a paradoxical nature to the law of the red cow. The person who was ritually impure through contact with a corpse became pure - but the person performing the ritual became impure!

Rav Moshe Feinstein explained that this paradox applies to Torah life in general. For example, we should be generous with our own money, but tight-fisted when it comes to making sure that others don't lose what is theirs. Or we should never demand honour for ourselves - but we should be very concerned about the honour of others.

Life is usually complicated, and we need wisdom to know how to navigate.



Greatness

When one recognizes that he was created in the image of G-d, and reflects upon the greatness within him, it is impossible for him to conduct himself in a trivial manner. ~ R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the Alter of Slabodka.



Rabbi Y Richtman- The Young Torah Genius Who Didn't Know How to Drink a Cup of Coffee



Rabbi Meshulm Igra of Pressburg was one of Europe's leading scholars in the latter part of the 18th century. As a young man, he was engaged to the daughter of a prominent community leader in the city of Butzatz. A few months before the wedding the young chosson ate a meal at the home of his future father-in-law. Dessert was served together with a hot treat a delicacy that the impoverished Reb Meshulam had never heard of -- coffee.

The servant brought out a cup of brewed coffee together with sugar and milk. The prospective father-in-law directed his son in law to partake. The young scholar looked quizzically at each of the entities and began to ponder. There were two liquids and sugar.

The Talmud teaches that eating precedes drinking. He took a spoon of sugar and ate it. Then he was unsure what to drink first the milk or the black brew. Noting that darkness in the Torah comes before day, he drank the black coffee. Noticing the grinds at the bottom of the cup, he took his spoon and began to eat them. Not wanting to embarrass his soon-to-be father-in-law who had served such a difficult-to-eat dessert, he slowly chewed and swallowed the grinds.

His prospective bride stood in shock. "Father," she cried "I cannot marry a man who does not know how to drink a cup of coffee. He is a total klutz!" The engagement was broken.

Years later this same community leader visited the home of Rav Yeshaya Pick the prominent Rav of Breslow. Upon entering the study he noticed the rav engrossed in a letter. He looked totally concerned and distraught.

When the man asked what problem was, Rabbi Pick told him that he just received a letter that is filled with the deepest insights. "I have to be totally immersed in Torah thought to begin to comprehend the level of this man's brilliance. In fact," he continued, "I do not think a man of this calibre has emerged in the last fifty years! And," he added, "besides the brilliance, one can note his amazing humility and fine character throughout every word he writes." Then he looked up at the man. "You come from Butzatz. Have you ever hear of a man called Meshulam Igra?" The man didn't emit a verbal response. He fainted.

When he came to, he recounted the entire story of the engagement and its dissolution, how Rabbi Igra was meant to be his son-in-law but the match was broken over coffee grounds. Rabbi Pick looked up at him and shook his head sadly. "Is that so?" he exclaimed. "You gave up the opportunity for this great man because he did not know how to drink a cup of coffee?"



כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּל צַדִּיק וָקָם "A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up." – Mishlei 24:16

Life is all about the ability to get up from challenge. Greatness is defined as getting up one more time than what you've fallen down. The Torah defines someone who's righteous not as someone who had succeeded, but someone who has persevered. It creates a paradigm of what righteousness is – trying to do what's right, getting up from failure, and keep moving forward. (*Charlie Harary*)



Chazaq Weekly



Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, "Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes that it shall give its waters. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the assembly and to their animals." (Bamidbar 20:7-8)

Why was Moshe told to speak to the rock "before the eyes of the assembly"? What impression was meant to be made upon the eyes of the people? They wanted water. Why educate the eye?

The Sefas Emes cleverly connects this incident to another situation where someone was dying from thirst. When Hagar and Yishmael were cast out they found themselves in the dessert without water and in one moment after the boy cried out the verse testifies, "And G-d opened her eyes and she saw a spring of water, and she went and filled the skin with water and gave to the youth to drink." (Bereishis 21:19)

About this the Midrash comments, "And G-d opened her eyes" – Was she blind? Rabbi Binyamin says, "Everyone has a status of being blind until The Holy One Blessed is He enlightens their eyes…" Quoting from his grandfather and teacher the **Chidushei HaRim** he writes, "In reality that which is necessary for every creature is prepared, in every place and at all times, only it is hidden from the materialistic eye, and The Holy One Blessed is He enlightens his eyes and he sees

that everything is in front of him. And so it here that the desire of The Holy One Blessed is He was that the eyes of the Children of Israel should be opened and they should see that water was prepared for them in the rock."

In a book entitled **The Klausenberger Rebbe**, The War Years, Judah Lifschiltz records the following remarkable incident about the Klausenberger Rebbe on a Nazi death march. The night was dark. The moon's silver light was obscured by clouds. The beaten marchers were surrounded by SS guards who had fallen asleep at their posts. A whisper quickly rustled through the prisoners surrounding the Rebbe. "He says to try… everyone should dig beneath himself. G-d's salvation comes in the blink of an eye." A glimmer of hope was kindled among the downtrodden Jews.

During the three days of the march the Rebbe had pleaded with the prisoners not to drink from the dirty puddles on the side of the road…the Rebbe cautioned, begging for restraint. Now the Rebbe had given a positive command about the water, the prisoners had faith in him. Everyone began to dig-some with spoons and some with pieces of wood, others with fingers and fingernails. At first there were only a few small holes. Then the holes became larger…and then, the water began to flow in small spurts. As the water appeared, joy engulfed the camp…Fresh water… prisoners hugged and kissed each other out of joy and happiness.

Half-dead Jews were returned to life in a moment. Feverishly they dug more and more, deeper and deeper. The spurts grew stronger and stronger. …Springs of water shot up everywhere…Thousands of prisoners gulped down the water until their thirst was quenched and their exhausted limbs were refreshed…

When asked if the amazing story was true the Rebbe answered, "If anyone doubted, chas v'shalom, the Torah's stories about Avrham Avinu's ram or Miriam's well, he saw clearly on that day that the

Master of the Universe truly provides for his creations precisely what they need, and exactly when they need it.

I had heard this same incident recounted by an eye witness. When describing how the Rebbe reached into the ground, he suddenly burst into uncontrollable tears saying, "There was water! There was water!" *(By R' Label Lam)*

Migdal Ohr - J. Gewirtz

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן יַעַן לֹא־הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
"הקב"ה said to Moshe and Aharon, because you didn't trust in Me to sanctify me in the eyes of the Children of Israel…" (20:12)



When Moshe asked HaShem for water for the Jewish People, HaShem told him to take the staff with which he had performed miracles previously and go to speak to the stone which would give forth water and he would take water from the stone. They gathered the Jews and Moshe and Aharon spoke to the rock so that it would give forth water. Nothing happened. They reasoned that perhaps they had to hit the stone as HaShem had commanded on a previous occasion. The commentaries say that Moshe considered that perhaps this miracle needed him to take action, so he hit the rock (which Rashi tells us was a different one than the one he'd spoken to before.)

At first, only drips of water came out, as HaShem had NOT commanded them to hit the rock. Only when Moshe struck the rock again did water gush forth, enough to quench the thirst of all the

people. Alas, this was to be the downfall of Moshe and Aharon. Because of this, they were not destined to bring the Jews into the Promised Land. HaShem told them it was, "Because you didn't trust in Me to glorify Me." What was the possible glorification and where was the lack of faith?

The Midrash relates that a stone which has no needs, listening to G-d's word would teach that man who has many needs must surely listen. But perhaps there was also another lesson. - When Moshe hit the rock the first time and only drips came out, he could have recognized that this wasn't what הקב"ה had said would happen, and that he may have misunderstood. He could have publicly admitted he made a mistake and then spoken to the rock at that moment. Had he done so, he would have taught the Jewish People that mistakes are not permanent and making one does not diminish your stature. (See Rashi Vay. 4:22)

This, then, would have been the Kiddush HaShem, the sanctification of G-d's name that could have taken place. That a person could be so desirous of serving HaShem that even when it made him look bad he was concerned with HaShem's honour more than his own would have been a valuable lesson.

So why didn't Moshe do that? Why hit the rock again? It may be that Moshe reasoned that if the water didn't flow as he'd announced, they would no longer trust him to be their leader. Therefore, he didn't want to show that it didn't work. This, then, was a lack of faith in HaShem, Who had assured him before the giving of the Torah, "And they will trust in you forever."

Since HaShem said the Jews would always believe in him, Moshe could have admitted he misunderstood and taught the Jews how to be flexible and ready to change in seeking HaShem's will. Missing that lesson was such a lost opportunity that he could not continue to lead the Jewish People.

וירם משה את ידו ויך את הסלע במטהו פעמים ויצאו מים רבים ותשת העדה ובעירם ***"Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice; abundant water came forth and the assembly and their animals drank."*** (20:11)

Midrash Rabbah relates: Moshe hit the rock once, and water began to trickle out, as is written (Tehilim 78:20), *"He struck a rock and water dripped."* Bnei Yisrael said to him, "Son of Amram: This is enough water only for a nursing child!" Immediately, Moshe became angry and hit the rock twice. Then the water washed over those who had been mocking, as is written (also in Tehilim 78:20), "Streams flooded forth."



Why did Hashem make the water flow begin as a mere trickle? **R' Eliyahu Hakohen** ("Ba'al Shevet Mussar"; Izmir, Turkey; died 1729) answers: The Talmud Yerushalmi (Shekalim ch.6) foretells a day when water will flow from the Holy of Holies in the Bet Hamikdash. That stream will begin as narrow as the antennae of the smallest insect, then it will widen to the width of a grasshopper's antennae, and then it will continue widening and becoming deeper until it is a fierce river.

R' Eliyahu continues: Hashem wished to give Bnei Yisrael in the desert a taste of this miracle, so He caused the water to flow in a trickle at first. Had Bnei Yisrael been patient, this trickle would have become a gushing river.

By losing his patience and hitting the rock again, Moshe prevented the abovementioned miracle from occurring. R' Eliyahu adds: What is the purpose of this miracle? One possibility is that the appearance of a raging river that began as an almost microscopic trickle coming out of the Holy of Holies–a place where there is no natural spring–will reinforce mankind's belief in Creation "yesh me'ayin" / "something out of nothing." Another possibility is to indicate that the closer one is to holiness, the smaller he appears at first; in the end, however, an overpowering rush of holiness will sweep away the wicked who are distant from holiness. *(Aggadot Eliyahu: Shekalim)*

Parsha Pages



ויקחו אליך פרה אדמה 19:2 ***"Take unto you a red heifer"***

Only to you, Moshe, and not to anyone else Even Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest man in the world, could not decipher the logical secret. **לַטמא מַאפר שׂרפה הַחטאת** 19:17

This Parsha was given to Moshe (heads of letters in direct order) and not to Shlomo (same letters but out of order)

אָמַרְתִּי אֶחְכָּמָה וְהִיא רְחוֹקָה מִמֶּנִּי [Koheles 7:23] "*I thought I was wise, but it is distant from me*".

והיא רחוקה is the same gematria as **הפרה אדמה (ספר מצות הגדול)**

whY I Matter - by Yedidye Hirtenfeld



שִׁמְעוּ־נָא הַמֹּרִים הֲמִן־הַסֶּלַע הַזֶּה נוֹצִיא לָכֶם מָיִם And [Moshe] said to them, ***"Hear now, you rebels, must we bring you forth water out of this rock?"*** (20:10)

Calling the Jewish people "rebels" was considered a very grave sin for a person on Moshe's spiritual level. For when Jews are in trouble, the proper thing to do is help rather than chastise them. *(Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev)*

Rabbi Yossi Goldberg - Aaron's secret

וכל בית ישראל יבכו את השריפה אשר שרף ה' All of Klal Yisroel cried for the fire that Hashem burnt

Chazal point out the difference between when Aaron was Nifter and when Moshe was Nifter. When Aaron was Nifter, the above Possuk writes that all of Klal Yisroel cried and mourned his loss. However when Moshe was Nifter, it doesn't say "all" of Klal Yisroel cried. Why was this so?

Chazal explain that Aaron was beloved by everyone because he was always making peace between everyone – **אוהב שלום**. They also write the special secret technique that Aaron used in order to make peace. He would approach Reuven and say, "You know, Shimon is really sorry about what he has said to you – he really wants to make peace with you." Reuven would be so happy to hear that and would agree to make peace. Aaron would then go to Shimon and say, "You know, Reuven is really sorry about what he has said to you – he really wants to make

peace." Shimon would be so happy to hear that and would agree to make peace. Hey presto! Both have now agreed to make peace!

The two obvious questions on this Chazal are as follows. Firstly, by



highlighting Aaron's pursuit of peace are we implying that Moshe lacked that Midda Chas VeSholom? Surely Moshe was as great a Baal Midos as Aaron was!? Secondly, how did Aaron's special technique actually work? By the time he had fooled two or three people by pretending their enemies wanted peace, surely the next time he would claim to Reuven that Shimon wanted to make peace – Reuven simply would not believe Aaron!

How could it be that this method worked again and again throughout his life?? Obviously, what Aaron was doing was not that simple. There is a concept that beneath the layers of a person, however wicked he has behaved, there is goodness. At the end of the day, we are innately good people and don't want to do wrong. Of course, we slip up and make mistakes and say things we shouldn't; but we don't truly want to behave like that.

With his incredible warmth and understanding, Aaron was able to see two people fighting furiously and yet still see the true goodness in their hearts. He was able to see past their behaviour and love them for who they were at heart. When Aaron saw and connected to the goodness of Reuven, he would approach Shimon and say as follows. "You know, your enemy Reuven never really meant to behave badly. Deep down, he's a good person and doesn't want to fight with you etc." And because Aaron genuinely believed in the goodness of Reuven, his message would come across and touch Shimons heart too. Then Aaron would go and deliver a similar message to Reuven.

Aaron was able to always connect to this goodness in Yidden. This was the depth of his secret to making peace. It wasn't just a "clever Shtick"; it was delivering a message of genuine love and with genuine love.

Moshe on the other hand, had a very different job to do. Since he was the leader, he had to criticise and highlight the faults of people. He looked at a Yid and saw what he needed to improve. Moshe wasn't able to only concentrate on the goodness of a person like Aaron did, because he needed to correct the persons ways. So, in short, Moshe was not lacking in any way compared to Aaron's Middos. He was just doing a different job.

Let's look to find the goodness in every Yid and love them for who they truly want to be at heart and thereby promote peace amongst Klal Yisroel.

Miriam's Well



Moshe Rabbeinu hit the rock of Miriam's well to bring forth water. It was considered a sin, and because of that Moshe couldn't come to Eretz Yisrael. According to Rashi, Moshe's error was that he hit the stone instead of speaking to it. There are rishonim who explain that Moshe's sinned when he said שִׁמְעוּ־נָא הַמֹּרִים (20:10). This was insulting the Jewish nation, because הַמֹּרִים means fools, rebellious ones, or people who teach their teachers (see Rashi).

It wasn't proper to speak to the Jewish nation that way, and because of it he was punished.

The Bas Ayin explains that Moshe knew that Hashem commanded him to speak to the stone, but since he spoke disrespectfully to the Jewish nation, he thought that he certainly wasn't able to perform miracles with his words anymore. This is the reason he hit the stone.

So what was his error? The Bas Ayin explains that Moshe should have known that even after speaking improperly, he could still do miracles with his words, because everything could be rectified with teshuvah.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah



ותמת שם מרים ותקבר שם: ולא היה מים לעדה - ***Miriam died there, and she was buried there. There was no water for the assembly*** (20:1-2)

Rav Yitzchak Caro, zt"l, the uncle of Maran the Bais Yosef, wrote that the water did not flow from the eyes of the people for Miriam. That is, they did not cry enough for her, so HaKadosh Baruch Hu acted **מידה כנגד מידה** -measure for measure, and they did not have water to drink. *(Lehisadein B'Ahavascha)*

'We do not need any merits to have our prayers answered. All we need is to recognize that we do not deserve anything and that everything we have in life is an undeserved gift.' ~ Imrei Yosef.

Parsha Encounters – Rabbi Ezra Adler



At the beginning of this week's parshah, the Torah talks about the parah adumah. Rashi comments that the use of a cow to render the Jews tahor is comparable to a scenario in which the child of a slave in a palace has an accident, soiling himself and the floor. Upon hearing about the unfortunate occurrence, the king declares that the mother must come and clean up after her child. Similarly, Rashi explains, the mother, the parah adumah, must come and clean up the mess of the child, the eigel hazahav.

A number of intriguing questions arise from this explanation. One observation is that if the parah adumah is brought to atone for the eigel, there must be some connection between the two subjects. What is this connection?

R' Shimshon Pincus explains that we must first understand the nature of the cheit haeigel. When a child cries, we try to stop the crying and also understand the cause. Similarly, we must clarify the sin of the eigel to be able to understand how the parah adumah atones for it.

Of course, there were those who served the eigel as an idol, but most of the Jews just intended for the eigel to replace Moshe, whom they thought had died. Their service of the eigel on their own initiative, without Hashem's instruction, was considered idolatry. In other words, their sin was erroneously believing that they knew how to best serve Hashem.

As we all know, the mitzvah of parah adumah is a chok, a mitzvah that is beyond our understanding; the parah adumah was brought solely to serve Hashem as He commanded. The strong connection between the parah adumah and the eigel hazahav is now clear. We bring the parah adumah, an offering which we would never consider bringing based solely on our reasoning, to atone for the sin of the calf, which was caused by relying on our reasoning without asking Hashem.

This explanation is satisfying, yet we might wonder why it was necessary for the parable to describe a child soiling himself and his surroundings in an offensive way rather than merely spilling something innocuous. Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to sanitize the example and omit the more graphic description?

Rabbi Pincus answers that when a child spills a drink, even on himself, friends and family are more than willing to help clean up the mess. When a child soils himself, the only person willing to deal with the problem is the child's mother, since her unconditional love for her child enables her to transcend her natural reaction and properly tend to him.

Therefore, the parable discusses such a case to illustrate how the parah adumah and, by extension, Hashem is willing to clean our sins, even the most "disgusting ones" like the cheit haeigel, since He loves us so much.

We can glean some very profound messages from this explanation to apply constantly in our lives. Firstly, we must always serve Hashem on His terms and not based on what we feel is right. This can be accomplished through consultation with rabbanim and roshei yeshivos who can help us clarify His wishes. Otherwise, we aren't serving Him but rather ourselves. Secondly, we must always remember how much Hashem loves and cares for us. He is more than willing to clean our messes, even big ones.

Often, we feel that we have sinned so much that there is no hope. That is untrue! He loves us and wants to forgive us; our job is to reach out to Him to ask Him for His help. If we always feel that love, it can fuel us to serve Him and never give up.

Short Vort.com - Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה׳ לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה *This is the statute of Torah which Hashem has commanded Moshe, saying 'Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a completely Red Heifer…* (19:2)



Whereas the simple translation of this verse is, "This is the statute of the Torah, "*Targum Onklus* translates it as, "This is the *decree* of the Torah." The word "decree" has more of a negative connotation, as **the *Chasam Sofer*** notes. He explains that it refers to the decree on Moshe to teach the Jewish People the whole of Torah, and if he was not successful in teaching them effectively, he would bear responsibility for their sins. This is what the negative connotation of the word is referring to. But why is this "decree" specifically mentioned here in reference to the Red Heifer?

The laws of the Red Heifer are the most perplexing of Hashem's laws. Its laws are the basis for the wisest of all men, King Solomon's comment, "*It is far from me*", due to the paradox that the ashes of the cow purify those who had become contaminated, yet those who are involved in its preparation themselves become contaminated.

Based on this, **Rav Pam** answered that the "decree" on Moshe came specifically within the laws of the Red Heifer since it was only Moshe who was told the secret of the Red Heifer and he was not permitted to share it with anyone. It was a "decree" on Moshe because of the pain that he felt by learning a piece of Torah, yet not being able to teach it to others.



The Kotzker Rebbe famously referred to "*a tzaddik in peltz – a tzaddik in a fur coat*" regarding a tzaddik who is out in the cold. There are two things that he could do. He can either put on a warm coat or light a fire; either way he will be warm but if he lights the fire, others will benefit too.

Moshe was the *tzaddik* who lit the fire for others. He lit the fire of Torah in everyone's heart and the fact that the refusal to allow him to teach this aspect of Torah is termed a "decree" is a true testament to Moshe's devotion to the Jewish People.

"If you don't know what you're living for, you haven't yet lived." – Rabbi Noah Weinberg

Life is the most precious thing we have. Everyone wants to live a life of meaning. But we are so busy 'living' that we don't have a moment to really think about living. One of my father's priorities was getting people to ask the big questions in life, to get out of the pettiness and focus on living a life of real purpose. (*Yehuda Weinberg*)

The Greatest Wisdom - Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

***זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה׳ לֵאמֹר This is the statute of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded…* (19:2)**

Specifically in regards to Hashem's incomprehensible statutes, the Torah tells us that the nations of the world will praise the *wisdom* of the Jewish People for keeping them. This seems strange; if the statutes are by definition impossible to understand, and we only keep them because we consider it a commandment from Hashem which one does not have the right to question, then why are we specifically receiving praise for our "wisdom" by keeping them? How is following a rule that we do not understand considered the quintessential example of the Jewish People's *wisdom*?



Let us answer with a parable: There are three patients who require medicine for their life-threatening illness; two fools and one wise man. The first fool says to the doctor, "I refuse to take this medicine until I understand precisely how it was made and how it works." Since his medical knowledge is almost non-existent and he does not have the tools to comprehend the science behind the medicine, this man refuses to take the remedy and soon dies.

The second fool is happy to take the medicine but does not even inquire whether the person offering the medicine is a doctor. Since someone referred to him as "doctor," reasons the man, whatever he gives me, I'll take. If this "doctor" is a fraud, then his medicine is also worthless. The wise man, however, ascertains with certainty

that this man is a qualified and knowledgeable doctor, and only then agrees to take the medicine despite not knowing anything about it. After all, the doctor has all the knowledge necessary to create and serve the medicine and trusting him is the wise thing to do.

The same is true with the concept of statutes. Although they are incomprehensible, once we have ascertained that Hashem — the Creator of everything— has given them, and we *know* with certainty that He understands everything to the minutest detail, then it is specifically with "wisdom" that we listen to and follow whatever He says to do. As such, it *is* most appropriate that the Jewish People receive praise for their wisdom for following these incomprehensible statutes, for our decision is not based on the statute itself, but on the One commanding it.



Living Jewish – From Our Sages

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־בָּהּ מוּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עֹל ***Speak to the Children of Israel, that they bring to you a completely red cow on which there is no blemish, that has never borne a yoke*** (Num. 19:2)

Comments Rashi: "It should be perfect in redness; if there were two black hairs upon it, it would be disqualified."

In the same way a red heifer is prevented from being "perfect" by the appearance of two black hairs, so too is a Jew's perfection disqualified by even the slightest "hairsbreadth" of dishonesty or deception, as it states, "You shall be perfect [whole] with the L-rd your G-d." ***(Chidushei Harim)***



"Leaders never use the word failure. They look upon setbacks as learning experiences."



Amalek or Kna'nim?? Written by Benjamin A Rose



The Torah tells us that the when the Kna'anim heard that Aharon died and the Ananei HaKavod went away, they attacked Bnei Yisroel. - Rashi tells us that this was really Amalek who spoke the language of Kna'an although they were dressed like Amalek. Why would Amalek attack again after having been truly beaten the first time? Why did the disappearance of the Ananei HaKavod give them hope? Why did they speak Kna'ani?

Rav Yehonoson Eibushitz answers that Bnei Yisroel did not perform the Mitzva of Bris Mila in the Midbar because the Ananei HaKavod prevented the Ruach Tzefonis, the northern wind from blowing. This wind is necessary for the healing process and without it having a Bris Mila would be too dangerous.

Now that the Ananei HaKavod went away, Amalek was sure that Bnei Yisroel would have performed Bris Mila at the first possible opportunity. They figured that in Bnei Yisroel's weakened state after the Bris Mila, they would defeat them just like Shimon and Levi did to Shchem.

The reason for the attack was that Amalek was a grandson of Eisav and they wanted to avenge Yaakov's stealing of the Brachos. To receive the Brachos from Yitzchok, Yaakov wore Eisav's clothing but spoke in Yaakov's voice. Therefore, to raise the level of passion for the fight they chose to carry the banner that would remind them of this episode and they as well wore one nation's clothing and spoke another nation's language.

Die In the Tent Of Torah? – Written By D Fine

The pasuk says אָדָם כִּי־יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל 'a man who dies in the tent' (19:14), which chazal darshen to mean 'torah words are only kept within someone who kills himself over them' (Brachos 63b).

What does this mean – we are surely not obligated to die learning torah if one of the main mitzvahs is to live?



The Chofetz Chaim explains that the message here is that when one is learning Torah, they are supposed to see themselves as dead – uncontactable. Just as a dead person cannot be contacted, so too when one is learning Torah, they should shut themselves off and make sure nobody else can disturb them from their learning session. And nowadays that would include turning phones off, I assume!

Why Hor HaHar? Written by D Fine

I heard this tremendous vort from Rabbi Tugenthaft.

The Torah says that the mountain that Aharon dies upon was called 'hor hahar,' which Chazal tell us means that there was one mountain on top of another mountain. What is the significance of this?

Chazal tell us that HaShem flattened all the mountains in the dessert as Bnei Yisrael passed so we would have an easy walk. There are 3 mountains that were left alone though; har sinai, hor hahar, and har nevo (where moshe died).

The idea is that these correspond to 3 crowns. The mishnah in Avos 4:17 cites that R Shimon says that there are 3 crowns – the crown

of Torah, the crown of Kehunah, and the crown of Malchus (kingship), and the crown of a good name rests upon all of them ('olah al kabeihen').



Har Sinai matches the crown of Torah for obvious reasons, Har nevo is the crown of Malchus – for this is where Moshe dies – and he had the halachic status of a melech (Rambam beis habechira 6:11).

Now 'hor hahar' corresponds to the crown of Kehunah (aharon was kohen gadol), and has a double-mountain, for Aharon also had the 'shem tov' which rises above all the other crowns, for he went out of his way to make peace between members of Bnei Yisrael.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Elchanan Wasserman once came to visit America shortly before the war, in order to raise funds for his Yeshivah. He was being driven around New York, and as they drove, Rav Elchanan kept his head down for the entire ride, learning from a Sefer. On one ride, the driver passed a block that had a bad reputation.

Rav Elchanan, who had not once lifted his head to look out the window, all of a sudden cried out, ***"Where are you taking me?! The Tumah of this place is unbearable! Please drive in a different direction!"***

No Woman No Cry - Written by D Fine



Two of our 'three shepherds' in the desert die in this sedra; Aharon and Miriam.

R' Sorotskin notes that whilst the Torah records that Bnei Yisrael wept when Aharon died [and later with Moshe too], the Torah does not mention any crying when Miriam died. Why is this?

He answers that the key is the pasuk **וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם** '*and Miriam died there and was buried there*' (20:1). This phrase is unique to Miriam's death, for with Aharon and Moshe it only says **וַיָּמָת שָׁם** - '*and he died there*' (20:28 & Devarim 34:5) with no mention of 'burial there.'

R' Sorotskin explains that one tends not to weep for the death of someone who is very old and has lived a fulfilling life actualising their spiritual potential. Thus, Bnei Yirael naturally would not have wept at any of Miriam, Aharon, or Moshe's death for they were all very old and had fulfilled huge spiritual potential in their lives.

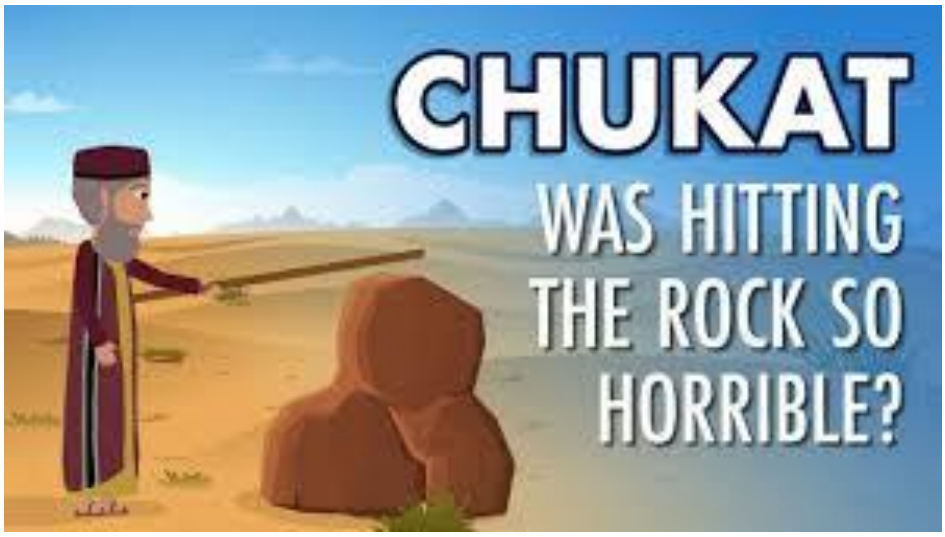
What Bnei Yisrael did cry about with Moshe and Aharon was the suddenness of Aharon's death and the fact that they did not know where Moshe was buried, so that they could not say a proper goodbye/had no kever to daven at.

This is why Bnei Yisrael did not cry at Miriam' death, for her death was not a sudden shock, and they knew where she was buried; **וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקָּבֵר שָׁם** 'she died there and was buried there'

Truth On the Rocks- Rabbi Yisroel Aaron Schwalbe

We read about the story of Moshe hitting the rock in this week's sedra and subsequently being punished. Surely, though the punishment of forfeiting his life and merit to enter Eretz Yisroel is a little harsh on Moshe – all he did was change a minor instruction from Hashem. He was instructed to talk to the rock, and merely hit the rock instead ?

Amongst the many answers to this question is an outstanding one from **Rabbi Yaacov Kamenetsky zt"l**. He explains that there may have been people in the future who would challenge the veracity of the transmission of Torah from Hashem to Moshe and would suggest that maybe Moshe changed part of the Torah – a bit here or a bit there !



However, this week's sedra teaches us that as soon as Moshe deviated marginally from Hashem's instruction, that was it – curtains for Moshe! Hashem had to punish Moshe so severely to communicate to us that this was the only time Moshe ever changed Hashem's words – and look at the punishment he received !

In other words Hashem's punishment was designed to protect the future of the truthfulness of Moshe's transmission of Torah to the Jewish people.

"It's a great mitzvah to be happy"– Rabbi Nachman Breslov

Bitachon! The Guarantee!!! והבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו

The Chovos Halevavos (introduction to Shaar Habitachon) says that the Baal Bitachon has ten advantages more than the alchemist. [The alchemist is someone who knows how to turn metal in to gold and silver – in our days that's like having a machine to print money].

The first advantage is: "the alchemist requires special materials to perform his operation, without which he cannot do anything. These materials are not found at all times and in all places. But for one who has Bitachon and trusts in Hashem, his sustenance is assured and can come through any means of all the means of the world".



To sum this up in one word the Baal Bitachon is **"unlimited"**. There are absolutely no limits to what the Baal Bitachon can achieve. The alchemist only can produce a limited amount, based on how much material he has, that is the amount of gold he could make. [One could only print the amount of money based on the amount paper and ink he has.]

This applies to every situation in life - this is the difference between someone that has Bitachon and one that doesn't – "are you limited to the situation that you are in"? For example, if the doctor says this …. is the only way to get better, is that true? The Baal Bitachon will never believe that doctor, as he believes that Hashem could heal him without what the doctor says. But yes, he will still listen to the doctor and do the required Hishtadlus. On the other hand, someone that doesn't have Bitachon will believe the doctors and will feel limited to the situation that they find themselves in.

The same applies to every situation in life, the Baal Bitachon never feels limited – he is connected to Hashem that has UNLIMITED POWERS! This is all based on the belief that Hashem is not limited to the laws of nature. Hashem as all the powers in the world, there are many ways how Hashem could help in every situation, even if we don't see any possibility, Hashem has a way, He isn't bound to any laws of nature. When one has the true feelings of Bitachon - reliance on Hashem, that He will help him in his situation, this will be the cause that he WILL be zoche to the Yeshua that he needs.

The more Bitachon one has the more he will get in return from Hashem. So, in every situation, anywhere you are, at any time, the Baal Bitachon has access to whatever her needs, whenever he needs it, there is no limits, Because Hashem has unlimited power!

Rabbi Gavriel Friedman - Check Your Calendar

Jonathan had grown up in a home that was Jewish, but only minimally connected to any form of religious observance. As Jonathan neared his thirteenth birthday, however, he approached his father and asked if he could have a bar mitzvah.

His father, not knowing much about what was entailed in a bar mitzvah, assumed that his son was asking to have some friends get together and have a party. But Jonathan had other aspirations in mind. He wanted to read from the Torah in shul, put on Tefillin and become a fully engaged religious Jew.

A local rabbi was contacted, and Jonathan began to study his bar mitzvah Parsha weekly. As time went on, the rabbi began to feel a nagging question. And so, one day, after learning, he turned to Jonathan and said, "Jonathan, let me ask you something. Why in fact do you really want a bar mitzvah?"

Jonathan, an incisive, young boy, replied with the following.

"Let me tell you a story. I have a sister, and like all good siblings, I love her, but I've always wanted a brother. So some time ago, I turned to G-d and said, 'If You give me a brother, I'll be yours. I'll go to synagogue and follow the commandments. I'm all yours; just please give me a brother.

"But I began to wonder, how would I know it came from G-d? So I added the following stipulation with G-d. My baby brother would have to be born on my birthday. If that would happen, I would commit to a religious life."

"What happened?" the rabbi asked, intrigued by Jonathan's story.

One year later, my mother gave birth to a baby boy. Five days before my birthday. I said, "You know what G-d? That's close enough. I'm in!" The rabbi could not believe it. An eleven-year-old making deals with Hashem, and it didn't even come true, and here he was still with it.



The rabbi went home and returned to Jonathan a few days later. "I want to tell you something," he said to Jonathan, "I checked the calendar, and your brother was born on your Hebrew birthday."

This little boy was none other than Rabbi Jonathan Rietti, a renowned Jewish speaker of today.

What do we learn from this story?

Sometimes we pray for something, and we get it; and sometimes we pray for something, and we think that we're not getting it. But maybe, the truth is, we're just looking at the wrong calendar…

The Torah Any Times Newsletter

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - Never Give Up on a Soul

Years ago, a Jew by the name of Rav Tzadok lived in Europe and made a living as a wagon driver. Known to be a supremely pious Jew, he would mouth words of prayer and Tehillim all day long. Despite his long days of work and driving near and far, he never wavered in his commitment to Yiddishkeit.

Yet, as Rav Tzadok grew older, he began to feel a deep-seated sense of sorrow in his life over one particular aspect that he wished he could do more for: his son. His only son was irreligious and had done away completely with a life of Torah.

With Rav Tzadok's own, personal dedication to Torah so important, he wondered what he could do to encourage his son to find such fulfillment in his life as well. But Rav Tzadok knew that it would not be simple to do so, as his son in no which way embraced his heritage and ancestry of illustrious Torah Jews.

But as Rav Tzadok's final days of life neared, he penned a will, and included within it a special request that his son recite the traditional Kaddish prayer after his passing. Nothing more was asked of the son but to say Kaddish in merit of his father's soul.

Truth be told, after Rav Tzadok passed on, his son began to ruminate over his father's lifetime. While the son was certainly not following in his father's ways, and that was not going to change, at the very least, he could pay honorary dues by fulfilling his departing wish. That was the one request he could actually commit to. After all, Rav Tzadok had been a loving and supportive father.

And so, the next day, off went the son to the local shul in earnest intent to recite Kaddish. But he didn't get too far, as the shul members recognized him immediately and threw him out. "What are

you doing here?" they berated him. "You don't belong here! You are going to defile us! You are going to make us impure!"

Without any other choice, the son ashamedly walked out. But he wasn't ready to give up so easily. Off he went to another shul. But the same scene repeated itself. "Get out of here! You're not staying here!" they yelled. But that's not all. This shaming scene unfolded even a third time.

But, despite not being interested in Judaism, the son was not a quitter. He wouldn't let go of what he said he would do. If he had made a commitment, he would do absolutely everything possible to complete it. He entered into yet another shul, that of Chassidic Breslov Jews. They welcomed him in and accepted him non-judgmentally and respectfully. For the next six months, all he did was recite Kaddish. No Shema, no Shemonah Esrei, no Tefillin. Just Kaddish.

One day, a fellow by the name of Rav Yankel approached the son. With love and care, he asked if he would like to put on Tefillin. Rav Yankel's gentle words, warmth and authenticity were evident, and the son complied.

It wasn't long before one mitzvah led to another. The son continued putting on Tefillin, reciting Shema and Shemonah Esrei and learning. However, there came a time not too long thereafter, that the government issued a mandate, resulting in all the mikvaos in town forcibly being closed. The foundation of the Jewish home, that of taharas hamishpacha, was put into jeopardy.

With this occurring, Rav Levi Yitzchak Bender approached the son of Rav Tzadok. "You are a gifted man," he told the son. "You have talented hands. We are in dire need of a mikvah to serve our community. If you could commit to building a secret mikvah that would not be known to anyone but those members of our community, it would be an unbelievable blessing, and Family Purity could continue in our region."

The son of Rav Tzadok, with his artistic hands and masterful mind, built a mikvah and covered it over so well that a horse and wagon could drive over it, and no one would have known that a mikvah was underneath. To the son's credit, the practice of taharas hamishpacha resumed in the region. Even the day that the government caught wind that there was a mikvah in the Jewish community, and sent out officials to look throughout the city, they found nothing. Rav Tzadok's son had done such a brilliant job camouflaging it that they walked right over it and never discovered anything.

This son, the one who was told these very words, "You are going to defile us! You are going to make us impure!" was the very individual who brought purity and holiness to the entire community.

Each and every one of us possess the incredible potential and power to purify, uplift and inspire ourselves and those around. We are capable of igniting ourselves, and with that, diffusing light to others. That fire and passion can become so great that we spread it to others and touch their lives in the most profound of ways. Never, ever give up on a Jewish soul, because you never know where it may go.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

Since 1979, Benjamin Zander, originally from Buckinghamshire, England, has been the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic. As a world-renowned composer of Classical music and speaker on leadership, he has used music to inspire others and add a touch of joy and harmony to thousands of people's lives. In his June 2008 TED Talk, he relayed the following incisive and enlightening thoughts:

"Now, I had an amazing experience. I was 45 years old, I'd been conducting for 20 years, and I suddenly had a realization. The

conductor of an orchestra doesn't make a sound. My picture appears on the front of a CD, but the conductor doesn't make a sound. He depends, for his power, on his ability to make other people powerful. And that changed everything for me. It was totally life changing. People in my orchestra said, "Ben, what happened?" That's what happened. I realized my job was to awaken possibility in other people. And of course, I wanted to know whether I was doing that. How do you find out?



"You look at their eyes. If their eyes are shining, you know you're doing it. If their eyes are not shining, you get to ask a question. And this is the question: who am I being that my players' eyes are not shining? We can do that with our children, too. Who am I being, that my children's eyes are not shining? That's a totally different world.

"And you know, I have a definition of success. For me, it's very simple. It's not about wealth and fame and power. It's about how many shining eyes I have around me."

More than anything, it is our silence and other times our carefully chosen words which can awaken possibility and potential in other people and allow their eyes to shine brighter than ever. The baton is in our hands.

"When a person has true Emunah, there is no room for worry or fear. One trusts in Hashem's love and knows that everything He does is for the best." – Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman -Sweet Accompanying Music



The son of **the Chofetz Chaim** writes of an incident which occurred in Radin, at which the music band for a wedding was unable to make it. With no other option, the young men in the area gathered together some pots, pans and blocks and began banging away. The music was certainly not up to par of what would have been, but the men did as best as they could.

Watching the music procession from a distance was the Chofetz Chaim, who called over his son and asked, "What's missing? Why doesn't everyone look happy at the wedding? It's a beautiful simcha; what's wrong? Because there is no music, and if there's no music, the ambiance of joy and celebration is not felt as much. Of course, the main simcha is that of the chosson and kallah, but the music is an essential component needed to uplift everyone's spirits."

The Chofetz Chaim then continued, elaborating on the above idea. "In the World to Come, a person can have accomplished a lifetime's worth of Torah study and good deeds, but it is the challenges and difficulties which he experienced that add sweet music to his portfolio. Those valleys in a person's life sweeten the judgement and amplify Hashem's compassion on Him." Were you to observe a band setting up their musical instruments and equipment before a wedding, you would notice tiring hauling back and forth and carrying all sorts of appliances. As they then start tuning up, and each instrument sounds different, it seems like chaos. But, underlying all

this preparing, you realize that there will be beautiful music soon enough.

A person's difficult situation is preparation for the music that will be played in his World to Come.



SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS CHUKAS

The Local Rav and the Vilna Gaon

The Vilna Gaon, zt"l, held no official position in the city of Vilna. His Torah learning and advice on all areas of Yiddishkeit were sought after, however, it was widely recognized that almost all Halachic questions were directed to Rav Shmuel, zt"l, the city's official Rav.

Once, on a Friday, shortly before Shabbos, a neighbour of the Gaon discovered a mix up of some kitchen utensils, and a question had arisen about whether the food she prepared for Shabbos was Kosher or not. Because of the late hour and her distance from Rav Shmuel's house, instead of consulting the Rav, her husband quickly sent their son to ask the Vilna Gaon if the food was Kosher. The Vilna Gaon answered the young boy's question and ruled that the food was not Kosher, and it was not to be eaten.

At the very same time, his wife, unaware that her husband had sent out their oldest son, quickly sent another child to the home of Rav Shmuel, the Rav of the city, to ask for a ruling on the Shabbos food. Rav Shmuel studied the issue and then ruled that the food was Kosher. The child ran home happily to report the good news.

It was at this point that the conflicting opinions were revealed. What were they to do? On the one hand, the local Rav had given his official ruling. Yet, who was willing to go against the ruling of the great Vilna Gaon?

Again, a child was sent, and Rav Shmuel was quickly notified of the conflicting rulings, but he reassured the family that they could eat

their Shabbos meal, and the food was indeed Kosher. As soon as the child left, Rav Shmuel left his house and went to see the Vilna Gaon.

The Vilna Gaon welcomed him cordially and asked why he had come. Rav Shmuel humbly said, "You are the greatest Torah authority in the world, and I am not worthy to be the dust that you tread on. Still, I am the recognized authority on Halachah in this community, and it is not proper to have my rulings undermined and contradicted."

The Vilna Gaon nodded his head in agreement. The Rav continued, "I therefore beg of his honor to accompany me to the neighbor's home and partake of the food that I declared to be Kosher, although you ruled that it is not Kosher. This will clearly establish an unquestionable respect for Torah authority."

Amazingly, the Vilna Gaon agreed to Rav Shmuel, and together they went to eat of the food that he himself ruled unfit. The Vilna Gaon submitted to the authority of the local Rav in order to make a point, that one must not argue with the rulings of our Rabbanim, or act in a way that would take away from their authority! *(Torah U'Tefilah by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg).*

The Tailor Who Did Not Know He Was Special By Hillel Baron

Two simple tailors worked as partners in Vilna. They weren't making much money in the large city, where there were already many established and well-known tailors around.

They decided to circulate among the small cities of the region to find their luck. With G-d's help, they were successful, serving simple villagers and peasants.

In one town they passed through, they saw that the Jewish village manager was distraught. He explained that the nobleman, who was the local landowner, would soon be holding a wedding, and had asked

the manager to bring the best Jewish tailors to his service. However, the nobleman had not been satisfied with any of the work and was now threatening to fire the manager, and perhaps also expel the Jewish tenants from his properties.

Upon hearing this, the tailors said, "Why don't you present us to the nobleman?"

"Well," the manager warily replied, "you aren't acquainted with high fashion clothing."

"True," they replied, "but the nobleman has been dismissing the high fashion, so maybe he'll appreciate our simpler style." The manager agreed to give it a shot.



The nobleman asked for a sample dress, and after seeing what they had created, he was thrilled. He contracted them to tailor the wedding clothing for his entire extended family and all of his servants.

After the job was done, they walked away with a hefty sum of money. They also felt good that they had saved the livelihood of the village manager and the Jewish people of the vicinity.

When the tailors were about to leave town, the nobleman's wife spoke to her husband. "Look," she said. "We see how these Jews care so much about their co-religionists. Perhaps we should tell them

about our Jewish prisoner who couldn't pay the rent for his inn and is still languishing in prison. Maybe these tailors would care enough to pay off his debt and free him."

She approached the Jewish tailors. When they asked how much the man owed, they were told that he owed 300 rubles. One tailor said that this was too steep a price to pay. The other, however, said, "How can I just walk away from another Jew's plight?"

He told his partner: "Let us split up our partnership, and see how much each of us truly owns." It turned out that each was left with precisely the amount needed—300 rubles. The generous tailor immediately gave the money to the nobleman's wife, and said, "Let the prisoner go free."

Both tailors returned to Vilna. The one who kept his money was able to establish a professional business in the big city. The other was empty-handed, with no partner, and no cash with which to restart his business. He fell into a deep depression, and the only thing he could manage was to collect donations. He became a beggar, and it seemed to the local population that he had lost his mind.

Very desperate one day, he directly approached a wealthy man, asking him to spare a few coins. The wealthy man asked what he would receive in return, and the beggar answered, "I will pray for you."

The wealthy man chuckled, and said: "What will your prayer do for me? But here's a few coins either way." The wealthy man went on with his business meetings that day and was very successful. He thought that perhaps it had something to do with the beggar's blessing.

So the next time he was to have a business meeting, he made a point to pass by the beggar again. After giving him a few coins, he asked for a blessing. Again, he was fabulously successful with his business affairs.

This went on for quite a few months, until one day, while gathered with family, they asked what the secret to his newfound, absolute success was. He told them about the blessings he made sure to receive, and how they were always fulfilled.

Before long, the erstwhile tailor had a large following of people who would seek his blessings, which consistently came true.

A group of the **Baal Shem Tov's** disciples were passing through town and heard the peculiar story of the beggar whose blessings were always fulfilled. They told their master about it, and he said that this must be a very special man, with an especially lofty soul. "Bring him to me," he said. "I'd like to speak with him."

The Baal Shem Tov questioned him, asking what special deeds he had done. The beggar said that he really did not know of any exceptional heroics he could claim. "I'm just a simple man," he said, "No one unique or important."

The Baal Shem Tov had the man tell his entire life story. When he reached the part where he parted with 300 rubles to save a man from prison, the Baal Shem Tov exclaimed, "Aha! This is it! This eminent and selfless action of yours is what causes your blessings to come true."

Hearing this from the Baal Shem Tov, and realizing the uniqueness of his act, left a great impression on the man, and he was able to crawl out of his depression.

The Baal Shem Tov spent time with the sincere tailor and taught him Torah. Eventually, he became an accomplished scholar and a great tzaddik.

"Leaders think and talk about the solutions. Followers think and talk about the problems."

The Power of a Torah Nigun



A young couple managed a healthcare facility which was home to a number of Jewish patients stricken with Alzheimer's disease. They decided to prepare a Pesach Seder for the group. Those in the know told them that they were wasting their time. The residents were oblivious to their surroundings. These young, idealistic hosts felt that singing could overcome memory loss.

On the Seder night all the preparations had been made, and the patients wheeled in. They began the Seder by chanting Pesach melodies; the response was non-existent. Finally, they came to Dayeinu. When they began this well-known song with its generational melody, eyes opened, the residents straightened in their chairs; most tried to follow the melody and even move their lips. Music transcends time and reaches into the soul. Music can catalyze one's return to mitzvah observance.

During **Horav Chaim Volozhiner's** tenure as Rosh Yeshivas Volozhin, three premier students fell prey to the pernicious winds of the Haskolah, Enlightenment Movement. The Berlin Haskalah was a powerful evil inclination that wreaked havoc on the minds of some religious men and women who were lacking in their heartfelt relationship with Yiddishkeit.

Intellectually, they were there, but the emotion which is derived either from the mussar teaching -- which allowed one to introspect

into himself -- or Chassidus – which, powered by joy in mitzvah performance, added new life and vibrance to observance -- was lacking in their lives.

Each of these students excelled in a certain area. One hailed from an illustrious lineage. The second one was an extraordinary baal middos, possessed refined character traits. He was truly a special person. The third was a brilliant Talmud scholar. His ability to understand and delve into the most difficult dialectic was without peer.

One can imagine that the loss of these three exceptional students took its toll on the yeshivah, and especially on the Rosh Yeshivah. Rav Chaim wept bitterly over the loss of such peerless young men to the secular, heretical world outside the yeshivah milieu.

One night, his revered Rebbe, **the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna**, appeared to Rav Chaim in a dream and said, "My dear student, I will have you know that z'chus avos, the merit of descending from illustrious Rabbinic Torah leadership, does not protect from the scourge of the Haskalah. Likewise, middos tovos, refined character traits, do not protect one from the tentacles of the Haskalah.

The only merit that will ultimately help to extract one from this evil pit of heresy is Torah. The Torah will not allow one who had studied it with diligence to fall into the pit of kefirah, apostasy. He will return."

Years passed, during which Rav Chaim investigated the whereabouts of his ex-students. The student who had descended from an impressive pedigree of Torah leaders had long ago forgotten his roots. He had assimilated into the gentile crowd and was living as one of them.

The one whose exceptional middos distinguished him from his peers had become a philosopher, and, after having assimilated, became a

profound thinker and lecturer lauding a life of culture, rather than religion.

The third student, who was the Torah scholar par excellence, used his sharp mind to excel in secular law and had become a law professor of great distinction. One day, Rav Chaim heard loud knocking at his door. He opened the door to greet a man who asked if he could speak with the Rav.

The man was invited into Rav Chaim's study, at which juncture he began to weep profusely. "Rebbe, do you not recognise me?" he wailed. At first, Rav Chaim did not recognise him, but then it became clear that he was the brilliant Talmudical student who had swayed off the derech.

Rav Chaim rose from his seat, embraced his student as would a father who had just discovered his long-lost son after years of searching for him. "Tell me, my son, what precipitated your return to Jewish observance?

The student began recounting his past years away from the yeshivah, "I threw myself into secular law and excelled beyond anyone's expectations. I was doing very well, and I even enjoyed my studies and the work, but the geshmack, joy and satisfaction, the sweetness that accompanied my Torah study, was non-existent.

"I made every attempt to add some life, some spice and excitement, to my secular studies – all to no avail. My gentile friends claimed that my problem was that I was still Jewish. Once I would baptise myself, my life would change. I would be a different person. This is, however, one last resort that I refuse to embrace. I would never renege my Yiddishkeit.

"Unfortunately (or, perhaps, fortunately), I was informed that unless I were to change my faith, my tenure at the university would come to an early end. They could not allow a Jew to hold such a distinguished position. I realized now that I had come to a

crossroads, I needed to decide which way I was going, with whom would my allegiances be. I asked them to allow me three days to render my decision.

"I vacillated back and forth, unable to resolve my quandary, until, on day three, as I was walking down a street in the Jewish neighborhood, I heard a sweet song. I was drawn to that niggun, the chant of a young man studying a blatt Gemorah. The sound was overwhelming. This is what I had been missing. No matter how much one excels in secular studies, he remains extrinsic to them.

"When I learned Torah, I was one with the Torah. It enveloped me, and I sang to it as I studied it. The niggun showed me that studying Torah is much more than the simple acquisition of knowledge. It is a relationship! It is something to sing about. That song catalysed my return."

Tears rolled down Rav Chaim's face as he realised the truth of his saintly Rebbe's words: The one has who studied Torah will one day return. *(Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi Scheinbaum).*

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Chaim Yosef Gottlieb, the Rav of Stropkov, had an enormously large collection of Sefarim. He once explained why



he had so many: "When I want to help a Talmid Chacham financially, I buy a Sefer from him. That way he can earn the money in a respectable way and not be embarrassed to take money. That is where most of these Sefarim come from."

Greeting the Non-Jewish Secretary - Rav Reuven Semah



Rabbi David Trenk, zt"l, would visit an office every once in a while. The receptionist at this company was a non-Jewish woman named Maria. Each time Rav Trenk visited the office, he would, with his characteristic exuberance and energy, greet Maria.

If anyone has mastered the art of greeting people with a nice smile, it was Rav Trenk, who greets others – Jew and Gentile, it makes no difference – with excitement and genuine concern. And so, upon arriving, Rav Trenk would bellow, "Good Morning, Maria! So nice to see you! How's everything?"

During one visit, Rav Trenk entered the office and expressed his greeting to Maria as he always did. After he concluded, the boss, who was present in the room, approached Rav Trenk.

"Rabbi, what are you doing?" he asked.

"What do you mean? I'm saying 'Good morning' to the secretary."

"Well, Rabbi, Maria is not here today. Who are you greeting?"

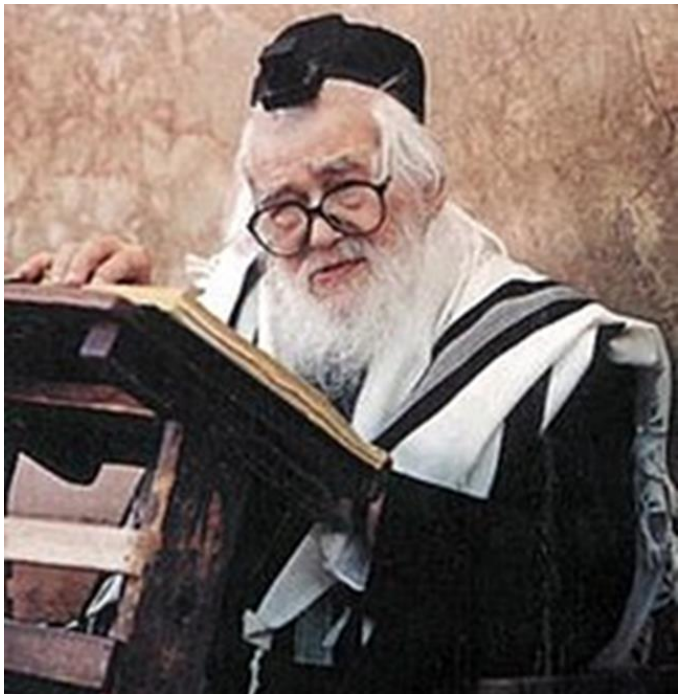
Rav Trenk proceeded to take his eyeglasses out of his pocket and put them on. Now able to see, he observed that, indeed, the receptionist was not there. He had been speaking to an empty chair.

The boss was bewildered. Rav Trenk explained that he felt that it was correct conduct to greet the receptionist properly each time he visited, but he didn't want the way she dressed, especially during the summer, to affect his neshamah negatively.

"I take off my glasses before entering. Then I greet Maria and only put on my glasses once I am in the next room. I therefore had no idea that the receptionist was not there."

Like Rav Trenk, we practice the halachah of guarding our eyes. However, we must learn from Rav Trenk never to look down upon the people; he never did.

Rav Shach's "Fan" Letters



A certain Rav was having a hard time taking on a particular issue that was affecting many people, and he was trying to get people to change. People did not take well to this, however, and they would degrade and belittle this Rav. Worse than this, though, was that these people began insulting, embarrassing, and cursing this Rav's wife.

It reached a point where the Rebbetzin could not handle the harsh treatment anymore, and she asked her husband to leave his position as a Rav. The Rav responded that before they did anything like that, he wanted them to go ask Rav Elazar Shach, zt"l, what he thought they should do.

When they met with Rav Shach, the Rebbetzin tearfully told him all the abuse and terrible treatment she had been enduring lately.

Rav Shach said to her, "You are bothered by mere words?" Rav Shach got up and walked over to his closet. He took out a big pile of letters that were written in protest of him that he had accumulated over the years. He said to the Rebbetzin, "If I took to heart anything that is written in these letters and listened to them, I

would not be a Rosh Yeshivah today, and I certainly wouldn't be able to help manage the struggles that the Yiden are facing." The Rebbetzin said to him, "If I may ask, why does the Rav keep all these letters in the closet? Don't they cause pain to even see them?"

Rav Shach replied, "I have requested in my will that after I pass away from this world, that all these letters be placed in my grave, because all of these disgraceful letter that have come to me over matters that I am pursuing L'Sheim Shamayim, for the sake of Hashem, should stand as a Zechus, a merit for me when I stand trial in the Bais Din in Shamayim!" *(Torah U'Tefilah)*

The Most Brightly Burning Shabbos Candles Ever



A woman once came to the **Rav of Lodz, Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel**, and complained about her poverty. She simply had no money to support her family. Her daughter was a Kallah, and it was impossible for them to make any arrangements for the wedding because of their situation.

Rav Eliyahu Chaim's heart went out to her, and he wanted very much to help her, but he himself also had no money at the time. He looked around the house for something to give the woman that she might be able to sell and use the money to help make the Chasunah.

He took out his wife's silver candlesticks and gave them to her with a full heart. The Rav explained that it was just a loan so that she could use the candlesticks to borrow money, and when he had the

money, he would redeem them from her. The woman at first refused to take them, but the Rav was able to convince her.



Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisels, zt"l

On Erev Shabbos, when the Rebbetzin went to get her silver candlesticks, she was shocked to see that they were missing! She looked everywhere, but when she couldn't find them, she told her husband.

Rav Eliyahu Chaim explained that he had lent them to a poor woman so she could make wedding preparations for her daughter, and he would soon get them back for her.

The Rebbetzin was happy that they were being used for a Mitzvah, but she asked her husband what she should use to light Shabbos candles?

After thinking for a few moments, the Rav said, "We can use apples!



I will carve holes to hold the candles, and they will be our candlesticks!" That Shabbos, the candles burned more brightly than they ever did before! *(Torah U'Tefilah)*

The Cow that Kept Shabbos - Rabbi Ronen Chaziza

There lived a saintly man that had one cow. Every morning he would get up to pray and then have breakfast. After breakfast he would take his cow out to the field and plough it, making the ground soft so he could put seeds in it to grow his wheat. He did this every day of the week but on Shabbat the man rested from doing work and so did the cow as the Torah says, "six days you should work and you should rest on the seventh you and your oxen and donkeys".

After many years this man became poor. It was difficult for him to provide for himself. Every so often he would take something from his house and try to sell it to buy some food so he wouldn't starve. One day he had nothing left but to sell the cow. It caused him great pain, but he had no choice. He sold it to his non-Jewish neighbour.



On Sunday the neighbour tied the cow to the plough and the cow did amazing work. "Wow what an amazing cow my neighbour sold me! What a good deal!" The neighbour said to himself as he was really pleased with the cow he bought from the saintly man. He did this Monday Tuesday and every day until Shabbat. On Shabbat, he tied her up to the plough, but she just laid there and didn't budge!

"Hey! You! Get up! We have work to do!! The opened her big eyes and looked at her owner and let out a big mooooooooooo! The owner even took a stick and started hitting her to get up but she just wouldn't and she let out another mooooooooo!

The neighbour was furious, and he ran back to his saintly neighbor to complain. The Saintly man received him graciously; "How can I

help you?" He asked. "You sold me a bad cow!" The gentile neighbour complained. "How is the cow bad? What did it do?" asked the saintly man. The man answered, "It just lies on the floor and doesn't do anything! I want my money back!!" The saintly man was puzzled. She always worked for me, she was a great worker… and never made trouble!" The gentile said, "Come see for yourself!"

The saintly man came and saw for himself that the cow was just sitting there, and she refused to get up. The saintly man asked, "But she worked before today, right?"

"Yes, she did, she was great," said the gentile.

"Okay don't worry I'll make sure she'll start working for you right away," said the saintly man. He went over to the cow and whispered in her ear: "Until this week you belonged to me, and you had to keep Shabbat. But now you belong to this gentile neighbour and you no longer need to keep Shabbat! So, I ask you to listen to your new owner and do what he says!" The cow suddenly stretched out her legs and stood up ready to go to work.

The gentile owner was afraid. "What did you say to her was it a magic spell" asked the gentile to the saintly man? I'm afraid next week she won't want to work again!"

The saintly man answered: "Don't worry, I didn't do any magic. I just gently explained to her that when I owned her, she had to keep Shabbat but now that you own her, she no longer needs to keep Shabbat and she can begin working…"

This gentile neighbour was astounded. "How can it be that a cow understands what Shabbat is and I don't? Is my brain smaller than hers? This man converted to Judaism and became a great Torah sage called Yohanan ben Turta, 'Johanan the son of the Cow', because it was the cow that aroused him to seek out the truth of Judaism.

Precious Kiddush Bread - Yerachmiel Tilles



Rabbi Yehuda "Yudel" Holtzman was an accomplished, pious Talmudic scholar who lived in Jerusalem, and was known by all as a *tzadik*. One day, a charity collector came to Reb Yudel and told him of a destitute and sickly man who required an operation, for which he needed the sum of 60 liras. In those days, that was considered a princely sum. The collector was going from house to house trying to collect the money.

R. Yudel sighed. "What shall I do? I have nothing left from my *ma'aser* money, and I have also already 'borrowed' from the *ma'aser* of whatever profit I will make for the next full year. All that has already gone to *tzedaka*."

Hearing this, the collector left Holtzman's home. He had not gone far, however, when he heard R. Yudel calling after him: "But we have to help the sick man. Go to the central *gemach* and borrow 20 liras in my name. I will pay the loan back at the rate of half a shilling per week. I've calculated that I spend half a shilling each week to buy wine for *kiddush*, but I can just as easily make *kiddush* over bread. I can use that half-shilling to pay back the loan."

The collector went to the *gemach* and received the loan. R. Yudel duly repaid it at the rate of half a shilling per week, by denying himself wine for *kiddush*.

It took him more than sixteen years to pay back the entire debt.

(This story was confirmed by a relative of Yudel Holtzman, who spent several Shabbatot at the Holtzman home, and each time saw

R. Yudel make *kiddush* over challot instead of wine. This surprised him. He could not understand why R. Yudel had this practice. It was only years later, after R. Yudel had long passed away, that he learned of the loan from someone who heard about it from the charity collector himself. Then he understood.)

Only the Money Was in Exile By Rabbi Sholom Klass



The Baal Shem Tov had two grandsons, Rav Moshe Chaim Ephraim and Reb Baruch. Both were pious and well educated in Torah, yet Rav Moshe lived a frugal and poor life while his brother, Reb Baruch, became very wealthy.

One day Reb Baruch decided to spend Shabbos with his brother. Rebbe Moshe was honored and told his wife to prepare the best of everything in honour of his brother. The poor woman sighed as she counted her few kopeks, but as a dutiful wife she went to the marketplace and borrowed enough money to purchase extra food for Shabbos.

That night, when the two brothers came home from *shul*, they saw two small candles burning in an earthen dish and a white tablecloth spread out over the table with two small challahs on it. A small bottle of watered-down wine was near the challahs and a wooden bowl with salted herring and onions stood near it.

They made *Kiddush* and sat down to eat the Shabbos meal. Reb Baruch turned to his brother and sighing said, "Woe is to me, my brother, that I see you in such a poor state. How do you manage to exist in such poverty?"

"Why do you speak this way to me?" Rav Moshe asked. "Is there anything missing here?"

"Everything is missing," Reb Baruch replied. "In my home we have silver candle holders, beautiful furniture, the wine is poured into silver cups and on the table, we have enough food for a king."

"Where do you get the money to purchase all these fine things?" asked Reb Moshe asked.

"Don't you know?" replied his brother. "I travel all week from town to town, buying and selling merchandise so I accumulate enough money to buy the finest things for Shabbos."

"Then you are worse off than I am," replied Reb Moshe. "Your gold, silver and money are in your home while you have to wander from town to town as if you are in exile. While my money is in exile, in other people's hands, still I am at home the entire week enjoying the company of my wife and children and enjoying the study of Torah. Who leads a happier life?"

In Defence of the Czar's Honour at the Shabbos Morning Davening

In the mid 1800's, Rabbi Avraham Shmuel of Aishishok served as the Rav of the town of Rassein, a village near Kownus, Lithuania. A brilliant scholar and the author of the Amudei Aish, the community revered him and afforded him the utmost respect.

Unfortunately, the Czar government of that era had different visions for a rabbi and appointed their own lackey, a puppet of the state, known as a "Rav Mitaam."

The Rav Mitaam served as the official liaison to the Russian Government and any official dictate or transaction having to do with Judaism, went only through the Rav Mitaam.

Unfortunately for that Rabbi, the townsfolk knew of his very limited capabilities, and relegated him to a seat in the middle of the congregation, near the Bimah as opposed to the traditional place up front near the "Holy Ark." One week, the young designate decided that he had enough. He wanted to be afforded the same dignity as Rabbi Avraham Shmuel. He woke up early that Shabbos and came to shul before anyone arrived. He sat himself down in the seat designated for Rabbi Avraham Shmuel, which was next to the "Aron Kodesh".



Of course, no one had the nerve to say anything to him for fear of government reprisal. During that era, immediately before the Mussaf prayers, all congregations throughout Russia said a special prayer on behalf of the Government and Czar Nikolai.

That week the Chazan forgot (on purpose or accidentally) to say the prayer. He was about to continue with the service when suddenly an elderly Jew, a former Cantonist soldier who was captured as a youngster and forced to serve in the Czar's army for many years, jumped up from his seat and charged toward the front of the synagogue. He began raining blows on the designated rabbi, the Rav Mitaam.

"What kind of Rabbi are you?" he shouted. "How dare you allow the Chazan to omit the prayer on behalf of our benevolent leader? I served the Czar faithfully for twenty years and you "forget" to bless him?!"

The congregants joined the fray, some trying to separate the older soldier from the bedazzled rabbi, others getting in the blows they

always longed to afford the government-appointed rabbi. It was not long before the police arrived, and arrested the soldier, who was dragged out of the synagogue, yelling and hollering about the lack of honor afforded his Majesty.

"After all the years I worked for the czar, I will not allow this poor excuse for a rabbi, to belittle the dignity of His Majesty!" The local policeman could not decide the fate of the soldier who struck a government official, to defend the honour of the Czar.

Finally, the case was brought to the Governor General of the region who asked the "rabbi" to defend his inaction.

"You see," stammered the Rabbi, I was sitting very far from the Bimah and I truly did not hear the Chazan skip, the prayer. After all, I was sitting next to the Holy Ark all the way up front!

The decision came down from the governor's office. No more would the official Rabbi be allowed to sit up front. From now on, he must sit amongst the people to make sure that all the prayers are said correctly! (Story Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky) *Torah Sweets Weekly - Reb Mendel Berlin*

Why It's Foolish to be Jealous of Someone Else's Good Fortune - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

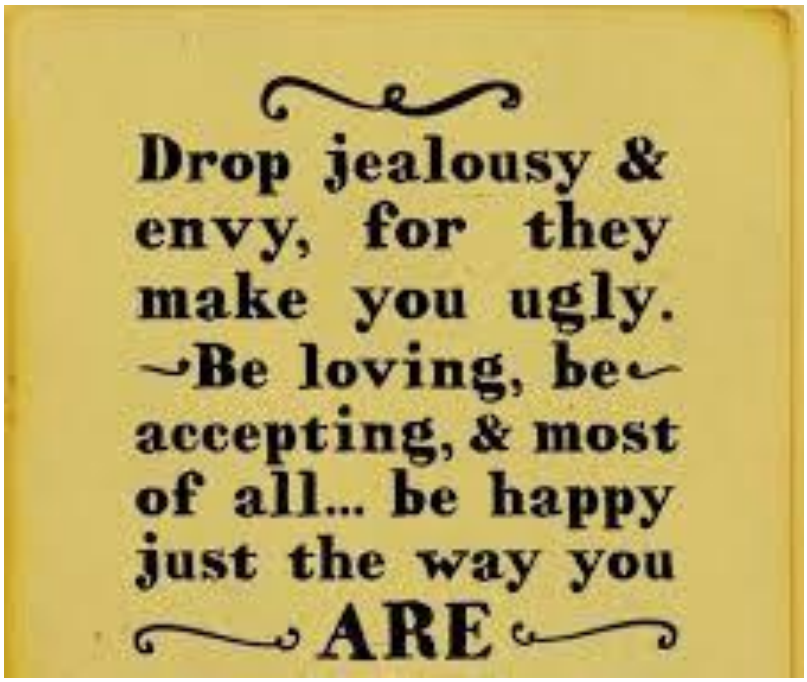


Yaakov and Moshe Ahron learned in yeshiva together. When they became older bachurim, still without a shidduch, they decided to study accounting, so they would have a parnassah when they eventually get married. They finished the course and they both found their intended spouse and married.

Yaakov landed a job at a firm with three other bookkeepers, but Moshe Ahron, unfortunately, remained unemployed. Yaakov had

Moshe Ahron in mind, and always sought to help him find a job. When Yaakov heard that his boss was looking to hire another accountant, he eagerly recommended his friend, Moshe Ahron.

The boss said, "I was really looking for someone with experience, but since he's your friend, I'll give him a chance. After an interview, Moshe Ahron was hired. Several years later, the manager told his employers, "I am moving out of state, but the firm will continue at this address. One of you will be appointed foreman so everything will run smoothly..."



Yaakov assumed that he would get the position. He had seniority and was the boss's right hand man. He was shocked when the boss gave the position to Moshe Ahron. Yaakov thought, "If it weren't for me, Moshe Ahron wouldn't have this job."

It didn't seem fair. He did a chessed, and now it backfired on him. For ten years, Yaakov was jealous. He didn't say anything. He kept his bitter feelings to himself and kept up a friendship with Moshe Ahron. He worked on his emunah, to believe that everything is exactly as Hashem planned it, but it was a very hard test for him.

Moshe Ahron's and Yaakov's children got older and reached the age of shidduchim. A shadchan came over to Yaakov, "Your son is a talmid chacham and a baal middos and I know someone who wants him for his daughter. He is willing to buy a four-room apartment in Bnei Brak for the couple, that's how much he desires him."

Yaakov was shocked. Who was willing to pay so much money for his son? "It's your manager, Moshe Ahron," the shadchan said. The

shidduch went through. Yaakov said, "For ten years I was jealous of Moshe Ahron, and all this time, he was working for me! My jealousy was all a mistake. He was working for my son's sake."

A chassan and kallah were engaged in Sivan, and the date for the chasunah was set for Sivan, a year later (which isn't uncommon among Yerushalmi families). Immediately after the engagement, the chassan's father booked his relative, a famous singer, for their chasunah.

A few weeks later, the mechutanim met. The father of the kallah said, "What are you plans for a singer?" "I already hired my relative," he told him.

The kallah's father said, "Personally, I prefer So-and-so should sing at our wedding. He is more professional than your relative. Can you back out of your agreement?"

The chassan's father called his relative and explained the situation. The relative agreed to relinquish the contract, though it was hard for him to lose the parnassah. He figured that Sivan is a very busy time for chasunos and he would probably land another job. But he didn't. From Shavuos until the 17th of Tamuz, that was the only night that he wasn't booked. He contemplated telling the second singer, who was also his friend, that the job was originally his, hoping that the second singer would back off. But in the end, he decided to remain silent, though his heart burned with jealousy.

The second singer sang at kabalas panim, at the chuppah, and then during the meal, but his voice was getting hoarse. There is a medicine that singers take to overcome hoarseness, but it didn't help. He didn't know if he could continue singing this evening.

Moments before the first dance, he sees the other singer, a relative of the chassan. He excitedly came over to him and begged him to take the microphone and sing instead of him, which he did. The relative/singer received full payment for that night.

Let's focus on the hashgachah pratis of this story: The relative didn't lose anything when he let the other singer take his place. He actually ended up gaining, because he sang for only half the chasunah, and earned full pay. The other singer also gained, because if he would be singing at a different hall, and lose his voice, it would be very embarrassing for him, especially if he wouldn't find a replacement. Everything was planned perfectly by Hashem, a year in advance.

The Joy of Becoming a Jew by Rabbi Tuvia Bolton



Rabbi Moshe Feller the head Chabad emissary (Shliach) in the state of Minnesota recently addressed a large group of important Rabbis and told them the following story.

"Two or three years ago a young man and woman in their early twenties appeared for the Shabbat day meal at my Chabad house in Milwaukee and asked if they could speak to me alone for a few moments after the meal.

"They told me that they were both almost totally ignorant of Judaism and the girl wanted to learn more. So I asked why only the girl, why not both of them?

"The young man replied that they wanted to get married but because he was born Jewish and she was not there were problems from his parents. This technicality meant absolutely nothing to either of them and they were actively planning the wedding until to their genuine surprise the boy's parents, who were as non-observant and atheistic as he, objected and declared that in no way would they support their son marrying "out.".

"Despite all attempts at reasoning with them they stubbornly insisted that the girl convert and that is why they are now talking to him in the Chabad house.

"They admitted that they considered the much easier reform route but when the girl heard that not all Jews accepted Reform or even Conservative conversions one hundred percent, she decided to at least find out what Orthodox, 'all the way' conversion meant.

"Rabbi Feller explained to them that conversion wasn't like learning to drive a car or play the flute, rather it demanded a new orientation in life. It would take years of serious learning and even then it would require a genuine, earnest change in priorities and a desire to serve the Creator despite all obstacles. He enumerated many commandments, many limits on life, not being able to do, say or even think what we want, anti-Semitism etc.

"But all this did not deter the young lady. She decided she wanted a genuine conversion, or perhaps she was just genuinely curious, and the young man really wanted to marry her. So, because the only way it would happen was the 'real' way when Rabbi Feller suggested that she should convert via the Chicago Rabbinical Council (C.R.C.) they both readily agreed.

"But then things really got complicated. After a few weeks of learning she reported to her fiancée that she really enjoyed the classes, and they were very challenging and informative, but she heard a lot of things that really bothered her.

"For instance, when they taught about the Ten Commandments, they explained that one of them is that Jews are supposed to keep the Shabbat! Then in another class they said that male Jews are supposed to put on Tefillin and eat only kosher food. So why didn't he do these things?

"The young man replied simply that these were not things that actually had to be done, rather ideas to be learned; she was there

to get converted so they could get married but certainly no more than that. The Ten Commandments were history, religion maybe even philosophy More like Ten Suggestions! But certainly not things you MUST do!

"But she disagreed. In fact, she couldn't understand what he was talking about. She kept quiet but after a few weeks of learning, confrontations empty excuses and denials eventually the inevitable happened.

"She told him that if he did't want to take Judaism seriously then she didn't want to take him seriously and she broke off the engagement.

"A year later she finished the course, took the tests and finally came the actual day of the conversion.

Right after the conversion, we suddenly heard screaming! "We were shocked! We didn't know what to do. Could it be that something went wrong? Why was the girl screaming almost hysterically!

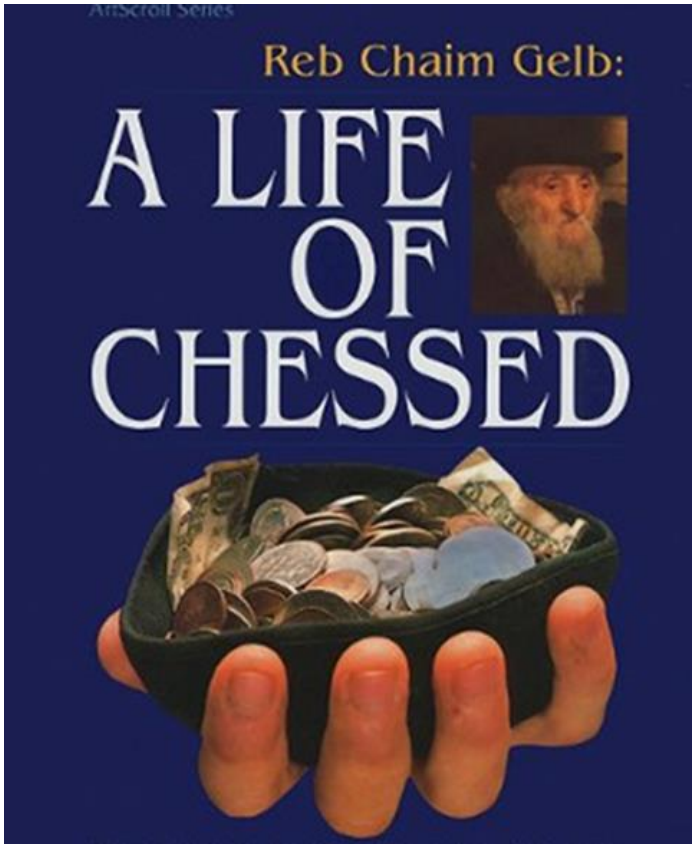
"In the next moment we had the answer. Through the door we heard 'I'm a JEW!!! I'm a JEW!!!!'

"The girl was so overjoyed by the fact that she had become Jewish that she couldn't contain her happiness. She was screaming in joy!"

Rabbi Feller was silent for a few moments letting the story sink in, and continued, 'My dear colleagues. There is a deep message in this story. That girl was shouting in joy because she had been a Jew for only a minute!

"But we have been Jews for tens of years!! Why aren't we happy like that? Why aren't we as happy?! The reason is because we forget the gift we have. We have forgotten the meaning, joy and miracle of being a Jew!"

Reb Chaim Gelb and the Mugger



Every morning, R' Chaim Gelb, the tzedakah man of Williamsburg, would rise early to start his long day of chessed and tzedakah. First of all, he would immerse himself in the mikveh to prepare for prayer. One morning it was still dark out as R' Chaim left his home. Those were the days in the 1930's and 40's, when the streets were more peaceful and crime-free.

However, on this day, R' Chaim was suddenly accosted by a huge man, who approached R' Chaim, ready to pounce on him. The Williamsburg streets were nearly deserted at that hour, and no one was around to help.

R' Chaim always wore his tzitzis strings out, and at that moment he was unconsciously holding them between his fingers. Startled by this sudden advance, R' Chaim raised his hands, with the tzitzis wrapped around them, and pointed them at his attacker.

His attacker took one quick look and shouted, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" Apparently, in the dark, the man mistook R' Chaim's pointed fingers with the tzitzis as some sort of weapon and began to run away from the perplexed R' Chaim as fast as he could! (A Life of Chessed)

"It isn't where you came from. It's where you're going that counts."

Rabbi Frand on Chukas

ALL the Silver & Gold, An Answer for Which I Waited Over Fifty Years



I finally found an answer to something that has been bothering me for over fifty years! When I was in the eighth or ninth grade, our Hebrew teacher assigned us a term paper. The class members were supposed to summarize the opinions of a list of commentaries as to the nature of the sin of Mei Merivah.

I believe there were over twenty different explanations as to what Moshe Rabbeinu did wrong at Mei Merivah. My assignment was to research the opinion of Rav Yosef Albo in his Sefer HaIkrim.

Rav Yosef Albo's opinion is as follows: Moshe Rabbeinu faced a crisis: His sister Miriam just died. The Rock was no longer giving water. The people were crying, "We are going to die of thirst." What did Moshe Rabbeinu do? He went to ask a 'shaylah' to the Ribono shel Olam – "What should I do?" The Ribono shel Olam told him to speak to the Rock. Moshe Rabbeinu hit the Rock. According to some commentaries, that was the sin. The Sefer HaIkrim has another opinion.

Rav Yosef Albo says that Moshe Rabbeinu had a golden opportunity here. There was no water. He should have taken the bull by the horn. He should have gone over to the Rock and said: "Rock – Give water!" Why should he have thought that would work? Because of the

principle that "A Righteous person decrees and the Holy One Blessed Be He will fulfill his decree."

There is a rule "Tzadik gozer, v'HaKodosh Baruch Hu Mekayem." Eliyahu HaNavi did this. He decreed that fire come down from heaven and consume his offering. Did he ask G-d beforehand? No. He did it on his own. Yehoshua bin Nun said, "Sun in Givon stand still, and the moon over the Valley of Ayalon". He did not ask for advice or permission from the Almighty beforehand. He decreed and the Almighty fulfilled the Tzadik's decree.

According to the Sefer HaIkrim, that was the sin of Moshe Rabbeinu. He had the opportunity to sanctify G-d's Name by showing that the Almighty fulfills the decree of the Tzadik. He did not take advantage of this opportunity. In effect, that is a desecration of G-d's Name.

It always bothered me—that is a Chillul Hashem? Moshe Rabbeinu—if you look at his record—never did anything on his own. He did not bring the Plague of Blood on his own, he did not bring the Plague of Frogs on his own, and he did not turn his staff into a snake on his own. Everything Moshe Rabbeinu did was always based on the Command of G-d. So, what is the complaint here? Moshe could answer back, "That is not the way I operate. That is not my modus operandi. My modus operandi is that I ask the Ribono shel Olam: What should I do? The Ribono shel Olam always tells me what to do.

This question has bothered me for fifty years! Not so many things have bothered me for fifty years. This year, I found a Meshech Chochma that explains the deeper intent of this Sefer HaIkrim. The Meshech Chochma asks: Why in fact did Moshe Rabbeinu never perform miracles on his own? There are Biblical figures who did miracles on their own, such as Yehoshua and Eliyahu. There are Talmudic figures who did miracles on their own, such as Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who put his heel on the hole of the snake. There

are such stories throughout the Talmud! Moshe Rabbeinu never did anything on his own.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that this was because Moshe Rabbeinu was different than every other prophet. When every other prophet received their prophecy from the Almighty, they literally fell into a trance. They lost bodily control. They were no longer in charge. So, when the Navi said something, everyone knew that it is not the Navi talking, it is G-d talking. The person could be lying on the floor having convulsions. He was not in charge—he was a conduit.

On the other hand, Moshe Rabbeiniu's prophecy was "Aspaklaria haMeira". He spoke "mouth to mouth" with the Almighty as a person talks to his friend. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu was afraid that if he would dare to "call the shots on his own," he might be deified. He was afraid that people would make him into a god. By the other prophets, it was obvious they were not in control. Moshe Rabbeinu was in control, so he never ever did anything on his own, lest the people say, "He is G-d!" (We know that such things have happened in history.) Therefore, he did not act independently.

There is only one time in Moshe Rabbeinu's career that he "took the law into his own hands" and acted on his own. That was in last week's Parsha. Korach challenged Moshe Rabbeinu, "the entire congregation is holy, why do you take it upon yourselves to rule over the congregation of Hashem?" There, without asking the Ribono shel Olam, without seeking guidance from Above, Moshe Rabbeinu proclaimed, "If like all other men these men die, G-d has not sent me…" He proclaimed on his own "I am going to make a miracle. These people are going to die an unnatural death. The ground is going to open up and swallow them."

Here he deviated from his methodology. Why? The Meshech Chochma says it was because at the time of Korach's rebellion, there was no fear that the people would deify Moshe. On the contrary, he was being attacked, "Who are you? You are no better than anyone

else!" No one could be accused of harbouring thoughts that Moshe was a god when they were proclaiming that he was no better than the rest of the nation.

Here Moshe was prepared to say, "Okay, I will show you! I am going to make a miracle on my own to prove that what you claim is incorrect." That was Parshas Korach. However, next is Parshas Chukas and the people now realize that Moshe can take the law into his own hands and can change nature by his own decree.

Suddenly, Miriam dies and there is no water, people are in the desert dying of thirst and they say to Moshe Rabbeinu, "We need water." Moshe's response is, "Nu, I need to ask the Ribono shel Olam what to do." The people became disillusioned. "Oh, is that so? Last week in Parshas Korach when your honor was on the line, you did not ask any questions. You were concerned about your own kavod, so you made a miracle on the spot! Now when we are all thirsty, you suddenly need to stall and ask the Ribono shel Olam? There was a popular complaint against Moshe Rabbeinu.

That is what the Sefer HaIkrim means that this was a Chillul Hashem. "Since you did not believe in Me to sanctify my Name before the Children of Israel." Just like by Korach, when your honor was on the line, you took nature into your own hands and made an open miracle, now that we are suffering and dying of thirst, you hold back your power… This, says the Sefer HaIkrim, was the complaint and was a desecration of G-d's Name, for which Moshe was punished.

A bachur asked the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l for a segulah for emunah. The Belzer Rebbe told him that tefillah is the best segulah for emunah, because when one prays, and he sees that his tefillos were answered, he will believe in Hashem.

Fascinating Insights-Rabbi Yehoshua Alt- Don't Think!

The **יסוד ושרש העבודה** teaches that the main Yetzer Hara is to get one to despair after the sin. In fact, the word **עבירה** is rooted in **עבר**, past, since after one sins the evil inclination gets one to think of his past sins causing him to despair. In this light we can grasp **מעבירה הרהורי עבירה קשו** - thoughts of sin are worse than the sin itself, as thinking about one's sin can bring him to despair. There is a saying, "Hashem buries our sins in the depths of the sea and then puts up a sign that reads: **No fishing!"**



R' Yitzchak Isaac Sher (1875-1952) would repeatedly say that one shouldn't think about his sins. Hashem created us with a Yetzer Hara. It's natural. Everyone has a Yetzer Hara. The only issue is how to cope with it, which is something we must learn.

We need to fulfil **אזמרה לאלו-ה בעודי** sing to Hashem with what we have now. That is, we need to serve Hashem the best we can even with our faults and sins.

The Divrei Chaim explained , **אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה** a permanent fire shall remain aflame…it shall not be extinguished, that there should always be a fire in your heart (**אש תמיד תוקד**) for Avodas Hashem (**על המזבח**). Even if you sin, this fire shouldn't be extinguished— **לא תכבה**.

It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light.

Chabad.Org - Is the Snake-on-a-Rod Medical Sign Kosher? By Yehuda Shurpin



My friends and I were having a debate about the medical symbol of a rod with a snake coiled around it. Some of us think it is of Jewish origin, while others believe it comes from the Greeks. Can you help clear this up for us? Thanks!

Greek Origin

There are actually two slightly different symbols of snakes coiled around a staff that have come to be associated with the medical profession. Both seem to come from Greek mythology.

There is the single snake coiled around a staff, which is meant to symbolize the staff of the pagan god of healing, known as Asklepios in Greece and Aesculapius in Rome.

And then there is the symbol of a staff with two snakes and wings. This one is referred to as a caduceus and is meant to symbolize the staff of the Greek messenger god Hermes, also known as Mercury. This symbol eventually also became associated with medicine.

So, it seems that both symbols are associated with pagan idolatry. However, it is fascinating to note that a snake on a rod as an agent for healing has an ancient Jewish source.

The Copper Snake

In the Torah portion of Chukat, the Torah relates the following incident:

The people spoke against G-d and against Moshe: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no bread or water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread."

The L-rd sent against the people the venomous snakes, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died.

The people came to Moshe and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the L-rd and against you. Pray to the L-rd that He remove the snakes from us." So Moshe prayed on behalf of the people.

The L-rd said to Moshe, "Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole, and let whoever is bitten look at it and live." Moshe made a copper snake and put it on a pole, and whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze upon the copper snake and live.

The sages of the Talmud point out that it was not, G-d forbid, the snake itself that caused healing. Rather, when Israel looked upwards toward heaven and turned their hearts to their G-d, they would be healed, but if not, "they would waste away."

Yet, even if this can be said to be the source of the modern symbol of healing, it may still not be something to celebrate. Here's why.

The Nehushtan

After the plague had ended, the snake-topped staff was carefully preserved for hundreds of years. In the 6th century BCE, we read about it again, after Hezekiah became king:

"[Hezekiah] did what was right in the eyes of the L-rd, like all that his father David had done. He abolished the high places, and smashed the monuments, and cut down the Asherah, and **crushed the copper serpent that Moshe had made, for until those days**

the children of Israel were burning incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan."

Tragically, an item used by Moshe to serve as an agent for G-d's healing had been used as an idol. As you can see, even if it perhaps does have "Jewish" origins, those origins were unfortunately tainted by the actions of subsequent generations, causing the righteous Hezekiah to crush it.

The Symbol of Hatzalah



Hatzalah, which means "rescue" in Hebrew, is the largest Jewish volunteer emergency medical service (EMS) organization in the world.

Rabbi Yehudah Leib Bistritzky was a founder of the division serving Crown Heights, Brooklyn, the neighbourhood where the Rebbe lived. He related that in 1984 he sent an invitation to a Hatzalah fundraiser to the Rebbe. The Rebbe instructed him to remove the symbol of the snake coiled around a staff from their emblem since it comes from Greek idolatry.

Indeed, to this day, many Hatzalah divisions use a slightly altered symbol without a snake.

May the true healer, The Riboino Shel Olam, bring healing to all those who are in need of it!

Midei Shabbos BeShabbato: by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler *(Adapted from the Yalkut Yitzchak)*



Seven x Seven x Seven

Based on the Pasuk in Tehilim (12:7) אִמְרוֹת ה' אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת כֶּסֶף צָרוּף בַּעֲלִיל לָאָרֶץ מְזֻקָּק שִׁבְעָתָיִם" The words of Hashem are pure, like purified silver, clear to the world, refined sevenfold"

The Rokei'ach explains how the Parah Adumah is based entirely on the number seven - Parshas Parah, he points out, contains seven cows, seven Hazoyos, seven Kohanim, and seven times Tahor. The Kohen who burned it had to separate for seven days, and it was sprinkled seven times from the seven cows that were prepared there, a total of seven times seven.

The Parah Paradox

Chazal ascribe the paradox of the Parah Adumah to the fact that whereas, on the one hand, it renders Tahor those who are Tamei, on the other, it renders those who deal with it, Tamei!

The Sifsei Kohen first points out that all types of Tum'ah are a sure sign of sin, which is detestable in the eyes of G-d. And he then goes on to compare it to somebody who is clearing out a house full of trash and dung, who may well not actually touch it, yet his clothes will inevitably become dirty from the smell and the dust. And so it is with sin, which is so despicable before G-d, that whoever is connected to it, irrespective of the capacity in which he does, will inevitably be affected by it and becomes Tamei.

Vechol Maaminim -'Eifer, Metzora,Nidchei – Amen'

ואסף איש טהור את אפר הפרה (יט ט)

The Baal Haturim explains that there are two additional pesukim where the word "v'asaf" is used. The first is "v'asaf hametzora" (Melachim II 5:11) and the second dis "V'asaf nidchei Yisrael" (Yeshayah 11:12). He explained the connection between the three pesukim: When we will merit that the words "v'asaf nidchei Yisrael" will be fulfilled at the time of the Redemption, then "v'asaf hametzora" – then all the diseases will be eradicated from the world, including tzara'as, and death will also be suspended forever (Yeshayah 25:8). Hence, the words "v'asaf … es eifer haparah" will also be fulfilled because there will not be any more need to purify those who become impure because of contact with the deceased.

Harav Meir Zev Hakohen Zelcer, a dayan in Munkatch, added that the acronym of the subjects mentioned in these pesukim **נדחי, מצורע, אפר** is "amen" – to teach us that in the merit of being strict to answer amen we will merit the Geulah and the promises alluded to in these pesukim. (Divrei Meir [*Rav M.Z. Zelcer*])

וְלָקְחוּ֩ לַטָּמֵ֨א מֵעֲפַ֜ר שְׂרֵפַ֣ת הַחַטָּ֗את וְנָתַ֤ן עָלָיו֙ מַ֣יִם חַיִּ֔ים אֶל־כֶּֽלִי

"He shall put upon it mayim chaim / spring water in a kli / vessel." (19:17)

The Torah is referred to as "mayim" (see Yeshayah 55:1) and as "chaim" (Mishlei 3:18).

"**כֶּלִי**" is an acronym of Kohen, Levi, Yisrael. Here we have an allusion to the custom of calling a Kohen, a Levi, and a Yisrael up to the Torah. (*Da'as Zekeinim Mi'Ba'alei Ha'Tosafos)*

"Believe you can and you're halfway there"

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

The Purity of Shabbos



We attain the purity of Shabbos by keeping Shabbos and by being happy on Shabbos. It states (*Bamidbar* 10:10), **וביום שמחתכם**, "On your day of joy," and Chazal (*Sifri* 19) explain that this is referring to Shabbos.

We should be happy every day of the year, as it states (*Tehillim* 100:2), **עבדו את ה׳ בשמחה** "Serve Hashem with joy." But there is an added importance to be happy on Shabbos. As it says, **יום שמחתכם** - "Your day of joy."

We sing in *zemiros*, **ביום השבת קודש שישו ושמחו כמקבלי מתן נחליאל** "Be happy on Shabbos as those who received the Torah." The joy should be complete.

Some explain that the *tochachah* (curses of the Torah) comes when people aren't happy on Shabbos. The hint is from the *pasuk* (*Dev* 28:47) **תחת אשר לא עבדת את אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב** The Bnei Yissaschar (*Igra d'Kalah*) explains that **תחת אשר** can be translated as "under [or after] the letters **אש״ר**."

In the order of the alef beis, the letters after **אש״ר** are **שב״ת.** The *pasuk* is hinting that the *tochachah* comes for not serving Hashem with joy on Shabbos.

It states in *sefer Masuk m'Dvash* (from Reb Yitzchak Parchi *zt'l*), "We saw, with our own eyes, people who had a problem when Shabbos arrived, but they took their minds off the *tzarah*, and they were

happy with the Shabbos, and didn't let their worries enter their heart; when Shabbos was over, their problem was gone. Everything turned around to joy. They were saved from their *tzaros* through wonderful miracles."

Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman *zt'l* was from the tzaddikim who lived in America about a hundred years ago. He set an example that one can be an *ehrlicher* Yid even in America. One of the mitzvos that he excelled in was *hachnasas orchim*. Every Shabbos, there were many guests at his table.

Once, his daughter was very ill, and Reb Yaakov Yosef and his Rebbetzin remained with her in the hospital around the clock. When Shabbos was approaching, they decided to go home, so they could perform their weekly mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*.

At the same time, there was another Herman in the hospital, not related to them, and that Herman was *niftar* on Shabbos. According to American law, the hospital had to notify the next of kin as quickly as possible, so they sent a messenger to the Herman home. But accidentally, they confused the two Herman families, and the messenger was sent to the home of Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman.

When the messenger arrived at the door with a letter, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Herman refused to accept it. It was Shabbos, and Shabbos is a day for joy. The messenger left the letter at the home of one of the Herman relatives. That relative came to the Herman home to tell the parents the terrible news, but they refused to listen to what their relative was saying.

After *havdalah*, another messenger from the hospital arrived at their door. "We're so sorry," he said. "We made a mistake with the last letter. Your daughter is doing fine. In fact, over the past twenty-four hours, her health has improved. There was another Herman in the hospital who passed away. We meant to send the letter to that family, and accidentally sent the letter to you. Once

again, you don't have to worry. Your daughter is doing very well." Their joy on Shabbos healed their daughter.

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The renowned *gabbai tzedakah* Reb Dovid Leib Shwartz *zt'l* was very cautious with keeping Shabbos with all its halachos. Even in the concentration camp during the War, he kept Shabbos as best as he could. One week he told his friends that he wanted to eat three meals on Shabbos. His friends laughed at him because all they had to eat was a small piece of bread in the morning and nothing else. But he didn't let their teasing prevent him from hoping and from aspiring that he will eat three meals on Shabbos.

Erev Shabbos, the commander of their barrack, gave everyone a loaf of bread and explained, "The bread isn't for today. Sunday, we will be trekking for three days, and this is all you will have for three days, so save the bread for then."

Reb Dovid Leib didn't heed the warning. He wanted to eat three meals on Shabbos. Friday night, he made Kiddush on the bread, and ate some. He ate another piece in the morning, and he finished it at *shalashudos*. He didn't know how he would walk three days without food, but in the meanwhile, he was happy that he ate three meals of Shabbos.

After Shabbos, their commander told them that there was a change of plans. "Everyone must return the bread. We won't be traveling for three days, as originally planned." Everyone returned the loaf of bread, except for Reb Dovid Leib, who already ate his bread *l'kovod Shabbos*.

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There was a child who choked on a coin and his face was turning blue. **The Chazon Ish *zt'l*** said, "The only solution is to bring the child to the **Ponovitzer Rav**, because the Ponovitzer Rav is an expert in getting coins out of people, even out of the tightest places…"

Everyone laughed, including the child. This dislodged the coin and it found its way out. The Chazon Ish commented, "Happiness saves people from all *tzaros*."

We'll add that the boy wasn't really happy. He was laughing because he saw that everyone else was laughing. But that was also enough to save him. Because when one isn't able to be truly happy, he should pretend that he's happy, because that will also bring yeshuos.

The Yismach Yisrael zt'l said that a hint to this is from the words (*Devarim* 16:16) **וְהָיִית אַךְ שָׂמֵחַ** . The first letters spell **שוא** , falsehood, and hints that a person can have a false joy too, because a false joy will eventually become a true joy.

Essential Rabbi Nachman



Hashems's greatness is unfathomable: that is why Teshuvah has such power. No matter how far you may have fallen - be it to the lowest depths - never despair, because you can always return to Hashem.

With just a little effort you can turn even your worst sins into merits. No matter where in the world you fall, you can easily come back to Hashem.

This is because of His unfathomable greatness. Nothing is beyond His power. Just never give up! Keep crying out, praying and pleading to Hashem at all times. (*Sichot Haran #3*)

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

***"זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל" "This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent."* (19:14)**

QUESTION: Regarding this *pasuk* the *Gemara (Berachot* 63b) says: *"Ein divrei Torah mitkaymin ela bemi shemeimit atzmo aleihah"* — "Torah has a lasting effect only with one who kills himself for it."

Suicide is forbidden! How can a dead man study Torah?

ANSWER: Often when people sit down to study, they permit various factors to interrupt them, such as a telephone call or the arrival of visitors. There is no way, however, of disturbing a dead person with a telephone call or the like. The *Gemara* is teaching that a person who wants to succeed in his learning must consider himself "dead": He cannot permit anything whatsoever to interrupt him. **(ר' אפרים זלמן ז"ל מרגלית)**



לא מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן ורמון ומים אין לשתות" "It is not a place of seed, or figs, or vines or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink." (20:5)

QUESTION: Throughout the sojourn of the Jewish people in the wilderness, a well of water accompanied them in the merit of Miriam. When she died, the well ceased. Why did they now complain about the lack of tasty fruit in addition to the lack of water?

ANSWER: Some have a custom to fetch water from a well or a spring after *Shabbat* ends. This is because on Saturday night

Miriam's well, which is in the sea of Tiberias, travels throughout all wells and springs. Whoever is fortunate to drink of its water is immediately healed from all sicknesses (*Orach Chaim* 299:10).

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 17b) lists the prerequisites a city must have in order for a *talmid chacham* to dwell there. According to Rabbi Akiva, one of them is a variety of different fruits, because through them, the eyesight of a person is improved.

Consequently, before Miriam's passing they did not complain about the lack of fruit because the drinking water healed them of all their ailments. Now that they had neither water nor fruit, they quarrelled with Moshe and argued that their health was in jeopardy and that it was no longer permissible to remain in the wilderness. **(פני ארי׳ זוטא)**

"ויך את הסלע במטהו פעמים" *"And he struck the rock with his staff twice."* (20:11)

QUESTION: Why did he strike the rock twice?

ANSWER: The letters of the word *"sela"* (**סלע**) — "rock" — spelled out in full are **סמך למד עין**. The middle letters of the name of each letter spell the word *"mayim"* (**מים**) — "water." Thus, in a rock — *"sela"* — there is hidden water — *"mayim."*

Moshe, by striking the rock *twice*, knocked off the first letters as well as the last letters, leaving the middle letters (**מים**), and water flowed forth abundantly. **(באר מים חיים)**

There is a popular adage, "Give till it hurts." Unfortunately, many people give when it hurts, but very few give till it hurts. The statute of parah adumah, which is described as "the statute of Torah," teaches us to help another Jew even if it hurts.

"והיה אם נשך הנחש את איש והביט אל נחש הנחשת וחי"
***"So it was that if the serpent bit a man, he would stare at the copper serpent and live."* (21:9)**

QUESTION: The word *"vehayah"* denotes *"simchah"* — "joy." It is definitely no pleasure to be bitten. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to say *"vayehi"* which denotes pain and sorrow? (See *Midrash Rabbah Bereishit* 42:3.)

ANSWER: Regarding the serpent, the Torah says, *"vehayah kol hanashuch"* — "anyone who was bitten [will look at it and live]." The word *"kol"* — "anyone" — which is superfluous, is written to emphasize that "anyone" (including a person terminally ill from another sickness) who was bitten and then looked at the copper serpent would be healed from *all* his illnesses and remain alive. To him, being bitten was indeed an occurrence which brought joy. (**משך חכמה**)

Beneath the Surface by R' Shmuel Winzelberg

(כ:ח) והוצאת להם מים מן הסלע ***And you shall bring out for them water from the rock.*** (20:8)

It says in ***Yalkut Shimoni*** **רמז תשס"ג**

ראה ניסים שעשה הקדוש ברוך הוא, כנס לתוך הסלע

שמן ודבש ומים ואש See the miracles that Hashem did, He gathered into the rock: oil and honey and water and fire.

Rabbeinu* Moshe Galanti, *zt"l, writes in his *sefer Parpraos L'Chachmah*, that this *Medrash* is hinted at in the words of the *pasuk* (verse). The *gematria* (numerical value) of the first letters of **שמן, דבש, מים, אש** equals 345. which is the same as the *gematria* of the words **מים מן הסלע**. (*Chaim shel Torah*)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Once, a student complained to **Reb Yerucham Levovitz**, the *Mashgiach* of the *Mir Yeshivah*, and said that learning Torah all day was too much for him. He said it was too hard for him to focus and concentrate for so long each day, and perhaps he should cut back on his hours.

Reb Yerucham asked him, "Did you ever see a farmer complaining that working the land is too much for him? No! Of course, you haven't! That's because he knows that working the land is a part of his existence, and his work must be done if he wants to live. It is the same with learning Torah all day. If a person knows and recognizes that learning Torah is the real work for which man was created, and this work is part of his very existence, it will no longer feel like it is too much or too difficult. We can only exist by learning Torah!"

The boy understood the lesson his *Rebbe* was trying to teach him and took a new approach to learning Torah.

By realizing that the Torah is what is causing the world to function and his very own life as well, he was able to learn with renewed passion and become very successful.

"When a Jew remembers that Hashem is watching him every moment, he becomes a different person." ~ R' Shalom Schwadron zt"l.

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ולקח אזוב וטבל במים איש טהור A pure man shall take hyssop and dip it in water *(19:18)*



Nowadays, *Eizov* [hyssop] is known as savory, and there are many *Segulos* attached to it. **The *Arizal*** writes that it is worthwhile for everyone to put some savory in his pocket. He also recommends this to soldiers who find themselves in dangerous situations, that they take some savory with them as a *Segulah* for protection.

He also writes that everyone should place savory on their *Shabbos* table. A house that has savory on the *Shabbos* table on *Shabbos* night – all harmful elements, magic, and evil eye [*Ayin Hara*] flee from that house.

Rebbe Chaim Palagi wrote that it is good to put savory on the table at the *Seder* night.

Rabeinu Yosef Chaim wrote that it is beneficial for a person to boil some savory and to place it on his face, hands, and feet, on Friday and it will help him greatly. (***Doresh Tzion***)

"The three 'c's' of leadership are consideration, caring, and courtesy. Be polite to everyone."

Etz Hachaim – R' C T Blau



There was known Rov that would only speak about the greatness of the Klal Yisroel. He was known to be a tremendous Ohev Yisroel. They once asked him to speak on the topic of the "me" generation how all people think about is me me me.

The Rov got up to speak and told over a story about a young Bar Mitzvah boy who lost his father. It was absolutely tragic! When the boy's Rebbe came to visit, all the boy was concerned about was asking his Rebbe about the Halachos of aveilos that he had to keep. All he showed concern about was to do Hashem's Ratzon correctly.

The Rov who was telling over the story to the crowd said, "If all a young boy who just lost his father is thinking about is how to serve Hashem correctly, I am sorry to say that the only "me" I could talk about tonight is "**ME** KEAMCHA YISROEL!"

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל ***This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent*. (19:14)**

Chazal (Shabbos 83b) teach, "One should never refrain from going to the Bais ha'Medrash and from studying words of Torah – even during the moments prior to his taking leave of this world." Torah reigns supreme and, without it, our lives are not the same. We should devote every minute that is available to Torah study – even at the time of death. - **אדם כי ימות באהל** -"*If a man dies in a tent*" has become the catch phrase for limud haTorah. One must give it his

"all" – even to the point of his life. Parashas Chukas is synonymous with Torah study.

The Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 580:9) cites the custom of fasting Erev Shabbos Parashas Chukas because a number of evil decrees against the Torah were issued on that day. In 1242, the most infamous incursion was the burning of twenty-four wagon loads of the Talmud in France. Over 10,000 manuscripts of the Oral Law went up on a pyre, an action initiated by Nicholas Donin de la Rochelle, a Jewish apostate, and sanctioned by Pope Gregory. It is specifically for this reason that it is vital for the week of the reading of Parashas Chukas to engender a renewed and stronger commitment to Torah study.

One question stands out that requires resolution. Understandably, Parashas Chukas is a time for increased Torah, but what does Torah study have to do with Parah Adumah, the Red Cow? The entire procedure is laden with esoteric mystery. Indeed, the entire set of laws involving tumah v'taharah, ritual impurity and purity, are beyond our mortal cognitive abilities.

Horav Shmuel Auerbach, zl, explains the relationship between, "The Torah is not maintained in a person unless he (is prepared to) dies for it," and Parah Adumah, the paradigmatic chok, mitzvah which defies human rationale. The Rosh Yeshivah explains that just as the rationale behind parah adumah is beyond our ability to understand, success in Torah is also not within the limits of human comprehension. One is either all in or all out. Partial involvement does not apply to Torah. If one does not apply all of himself to Torah, he will have nothing.

Understandably, one does not become a gadol b'Yisrael, Torah giant, unaccompanied by extreme diligence and toil in Torah study. If I were to relate stories on this topic, I would not know where to begin and certainly not where to end. I have selected three short vignettes which have inspired me.

Horav Akiva Eiger, zl, was Rav of Posen and probably one of the greatest gaonim in a generation of gaonim. It is related that during a trip, he was stuck in a storm, which compelled him to take a room at an inn. Originally, his plan had been to return that night. As a result, he had no sefarim with him from which to learn. He asked the Jewish innkeeper if he had any sefarim. The innkeeper was a devout, but unlearned, Jew. He brought out the only sefer he had: a Rashba on Meseches Yevamos.

Rav Akiva Eiger began to learn from the sefer with great enthusiasm until he reached a page that had apparently fallen out. Rather than skip that page, the gaon wrote the Rashba word-for-word from memory. He completed the entire text of the missing page and placed it into the sefer.

Most people view this story as a testament to the gaon's phenomenal memory. It has been noted, however, that the lesson of the story is much more profound. Apparently, Rav Akiva Eiger knew the entire Rashba on Yevamos by heart. Nonetheless, despite his uncanny proficiency in the work of this Rishon, he still sat and reviewed it with an insatiable desire and excitement.

A number of years ago, an elderly Jew knocked on the door of **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman's** apartment and asked to speak with the sage. He related that when Rav Aharon Leib was accepted in yeshivah, he was much younger than the other students. In addition to his young age, he was also short in stature. The other students, who were older, resented his presence among them. As a result, they decided to ignore him and not volunteer to be his chavrusa, study partner. [While this may appear selfish and immature, yeshivah students took their learning and self-esteem seriously.

They obviously felt that this "little boy's" acceptance into the yeshivah impugned their self-esteem.] When they saw that Rav Aharon Leib kept on learning diligently and was not affected by their rejection of him, they decided to go one step further (or perhaps

backwards): they put a doll on his bed, intimating that he was a child who should be playing with dolls, not attending yeshivah.



When a few weeks passed and the doll still lay on the bed, remaining in the same place, they realized that the young boy was such an incredible masmid, diligent student, that he never went to bed! This transformed their attitude towards him. They accepted him. Who was the elderly Jew referred to above? He came to ask mechilah, beg forgiveness. Why? He was the one who had placed the doll on the bed.

Horav Chaim Kreiswirth, zl, was a brilliant Torah scholar without peer. He was also an extraordinary ameil baTorah. He related that, while learning in Vilna, he had become stuck on a Tosfos. Try as he may, he could not understand the commentary.

He reviewed it numerous times, to no avail. Finally, he decided to follow Chazal's directive to review one's lessons one hundred and one times – which he did. It took him an entire day, and into the wee hours, of the morning to complete this endeavor – all to no avail. He became terribly frustrated and decided that he had no recourse but to go to the cemetery and pray at the grave of the Vilna Gaon. He would ask him to intercede on his behalf to understand the Tosfos.

He went there and prayed his heart out. He accompanied his prayers with copious weeping until, out of sheer exhaustion, he fell asleep on the Gaon's grave. A short while passed, and he woke up with a start. He thought for a few moments, and it all became clear to him. He now understood the Tosfos. This is a classic example of yegias baTorah, toiling in Torah.

Parshah Pearls Adapted from the Chofetz Chayim



The Lid's Off

וְכֹל֙ כְּלִ֣י פָת֔וּחַ אֲשֶׁ֥ר אֵין־צָמִ֖יד פָּתִ֣יל עָלָ֑יו טָמֵ֥א הֽוּא ***"And any open vessel whose lid is not firmly closed, is impure"*** (19:15).

The Chofetz Chaym would interpret the open vessel to refer to the human mouth. Someone whose mouth is constantly open, who does not keep the lid firmly closed – meaning that he fails to adopt the various fences and safeguards against loshon ho'ra, is impure (due to the loshon ho'ra that he will inevitably speak).

The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum- Killing One's Ego

זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל "This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent." **(19:14)**

The Gemara (Brachos 63B) says that Torah will only last if a person "kills himself over it." This is learned from this verse: "This is the Torah: If a man dies in a tent…"

Sefer Chashbah L'Tovah explains that the Gemara obviously does not mean that one should literally kill himself, as this is clearly forbidden. Rather, Chazal's intent is that one has to kill his "self". One must kill his own ego in order to succeed in learning Torah.

Every Day is a Divine Gift That Should Not be Wasted

Sefer Tiferes Shmuel says that the Torah is teaching us that a person must put forth the efforts to learn Torah with enthusiasm while he is alive in this world.



One should never push off learning and say that he will do it "when he has time". He should value every moment that he Is alive and has the ability to learn because once a person passes on the next world, there is nothing he can do to come back for even one day. He can never get back any of the time he wasted while he was alive that could have been spent learning.

Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer (Perek 43) relates that on the same day that Reish Lakish was nifter, two of his former comrades that he knew from the time in his life when he was a thief, before he went on to abandon that lifestyle and become a great talmid chochom, also died. The two thieves saw the great honour that was given to Reish Lakish in Gan Eden, while they were pushed around from place to place. They were confused and pained and asked: How is he different than us? Wasn't he just like us?

They were answered: He separated from you and went to learn Torah and do mitzvos. Therefore, he deserves to be greatly rewarded.

The thieves then said, "Let us return to earth. This time, we will study the Torah!"

They were told, "It is too late. You should have done teshuva when you were still alive."



Thus, the pasuk is saying: "This is the Torah." A person should immerse himself in Torah and teshuva. Why? Because "a man dies in a tent." He should think about the day that he will die and imagine how that day will look. He should think about how he will wish he could do more mitzvos and learn more Torah. But it will be too late. If he does not learn Torah and do mitzvos now, he will greatly regret it later.

The Tiferes Shmuel uses this idea to explain the Mishnah (2:15) that says that a person should do teshuva "one day before he dies." The intent of the Mishnah is that a person should always imagine that today is his last day on earth. He should think that this is his only chance to do teshuva and save himself before he moves on to the judgment of the World of Truth, where he will be judged regarding his Torah, tefillah, and behaviour towards his fellow man.

Every moment should be precious and valuable to him because once this moment is gone, it can never be reclaimed. This is how a person should feel every day. He should always remember that this particular day must be used properly because it will never come back.

Sefer Toras Chaim relates that **Rav Chaim of Brisk zt"l** once explained this pasuk in this way and added: Imagine if it was decreed in Shomayim that all of the people who have already died would be given permission to come back to earth for one hour and to use that hour to do anything they want. Once all of the living people hear about this, they certainly will come running to see their deceased

loved ones. They will run over to their relatives and ask them how they are doing in the next world.

However, the niftarim will have no time for such things. As soon as the hour arrives and their graves open to let them out, they will run to the bais medrash to learn as much as they can. They won't waste a moment to say hello to their children and grandchildren. They won't be interested in anything besides learning Torah.

Thus, when Chazal say that Torah only lasts if a person kills himself over it, the intention is that a person must learn Torah with the same feeling as those imaginary people who rose from the grave for an hour. If a person learns with that type of devotion, he will become great in Torah.

Those Who Support Merit Torah

בְּאֵר חֲפָרוּהָ שָׂרִים כָּרוּהָ נְדִיבֵי הָעָם בִּמְחֹקֵק בְּמִשְׁעֲנֹתָם וּמִמִּדְבָּר מַתָּנָה *A well dug by princes, dug by donors of the people, through the lawgiver with their staffs, and from the desert, a gift.* (21:18)

The Shinova Rov zy"a (quoted in Divrei Yechezkel Hachadash) explains that "princes" ("sarim") refers to "sarei haTorah", rulers over the Torah, i.e., talmidei chochomim. Thus, the pasuk says that they "dug the well", with "well" being a reference to Torah. It then says that this Torah was "dug by donors of the people ('nedivei am')." This teaches us that those who generously support Torah scholars and institutions of Torah are full partners in their Torah. They 'dig into' their Torah by supporting the talmidei chochomim and making sure they are taken care of.

We learn from this that people who support those who spend all day learning have a full share in their Torah as if they learned it themselves.

Waging War Against the Yeitzer Hara

עַל־כֵּ֗ן יֹאמְרוּ֙ הַמֹּשְׁלִ֔ים בֹּ֖אוּ חֶשְׁבּ֑וֹן תִּבָּנֶ֥ה וְתִכּוֹנֵ֖ן עִ֥יר סִיחֹֽן Therefore, the rulers say, "Come to Cheshbon, may it be built and established as the city of Sichon." (21:27)

Sefer Od Yosef Chai explains this pasuk with an incredible story. He begins by saying that the strategy of the yeitzer hara is to trick a person and fool him into doing things until he has him trapped in his web. The way to fight back against the yeitzer hara is to be smarter than him and to trick him into leaving you alone. This is seen from the following story:

The two faces of the yetzer hara

אם אבן הוא נימוח אם ברזל הוא מתפוצץ

A Baraisa was taught in front of Rabbi Yishmael: If this vile and devious foe (the yetzer hara) engages you, drag him to the Beis Midrash. If it is stone, it will dissolve. If it is metal, it will explode.

There was a man who was friends with the malach hamaves (in the way that the Gemara in Moed Katan describes how Shlomo Hamelech and several Amoraim were friends with the angel of death).

One day, the man was speaking to his friend and made one request. He said, "You are my friend. I know that I can't ask you to never kill me. I am aware that you are merely the messenger of Hashem and you cannot refuse to do your duty. I just want to ask you one favour. When you come to take me from this world, do not kill me before I have the chance to say Vidui. Don't take me so suddenly that I don't have the opportunity to say Vidui for my sins."

The malach hamaves agreed and gave his promise. When the angel of death agreed to his request and gave his word, the man became very happy. He said, "Now I can live forever! I just won't ever say Vidui

and the malach hamaves won't be able to take me because he promised not to kill me before I say Vidui!"

When it came time for this man to die, the angel of death saw that he had tricked him. He saw that the man made sure never to say the words of Vidui. (He never said Tachanun, which has Vidui in it.) He knew that he would have to find a way to kill the man. He would have to trick him, just like he had been tricked.

The malach hamaves disguised himself like a sick leper who was on the verge of death. He lay down in the middle of a street that this man walked down frequently. When the man passed by and saw someone laying prone in the middle of the street, he walked over to see if he was okay. He saw that the sick man was close to death and was crying weakly. He was shocked to see this and he asked the man, "Why are you crying?"

The sick man said, "I am a Jew. I know that I am about to die but I am an am haaretz and I don't know how to saw Vidui. How can I die without saying Vidui? Please can you say it with me? If you say the words, I'll repeat them after you."

He became full of compassion for the sick man. He was so moved that he forgot the rule he had for himself to never say the words of Vidui. He began to say Vidui with the sick man, word by word. He started with the first word "Ashamnu" and kept going, with the sick man repeating after him. When he got to the last words, "Ta'inu v'ti'atanu", the sick man jumped up and grabbed him. He took off his disguise and revealed that he was, in fact, the malach hamaves.

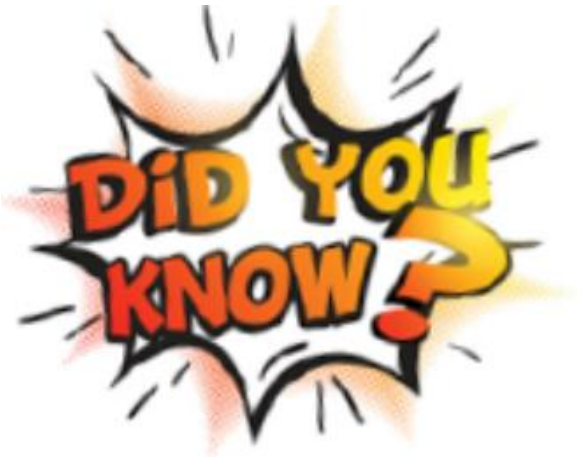
The man trembled in shock and fear. He realized that his friend had fooled him. He asked the malach hamaves, "Why did you do this to me?" The angel of death said to him, "You just said the words 'ta'inu v'itatanu.' This means: 'I fooled others, so I was fooled by others.' You tricked me by convincing me to swear not to kill you until you said Vidui, so I tricked you by pretending to be a sick man and getting you to say the words of Vidui.

"You have already said Vidui. It is time for you to die." And the malach hamaves took the man's life.

We see from this story that even the malach hamaves can be fooled. So too, one must try to trick his yeitzer hara. When one is doing teshuva, he should try to fool his yeitzer hara so that it doesn't attempt to find ways to stop him. Just like it always tries to trick us, we have to fool it.

Simple people like us certainly have to fool the yeitzer hara so that he'll leave us alone. We will not be able to beat him unless we have a plan of how to trick him.

The word "Cheshbon" can also mean "tricks" (as in Koheles 7:29). Thus, the pasuk is saying that those who rule over their yeitzer hara "come to Cheshbon" – they come to battle the yeitzer hara by tricking him. Through these tricks they are able to "build the city of Sichon." "The city" is a reference to a person's body. Thus, the pasuk is saying that, in this way, we can bring our bodies to "sicha na'ah", meaning to serve Hashem nicely and properly.



You probably know that the luchos have 10 commandments. But did you know that there are 10 words in Kaddish that correspond to the 10 commandments!?

The Mishna Berura [56:2] teaches that the following 10 words of praise in Kaddish correspond to the 10 commandments: (1) Yis'gadal (2) Yis'kadash (3) Yis'borach (4) Yish'tabach (5) Yis'poar (6) Yis'romam (7) Yis'nase (8) Yis'hadar (9) Yis'ale (10) Yis'halal.

From Our Sages

וְנָתַן עָלָיו מַיִם חַיִּים אֶל־כֶּלִי ***And he shall put running water (literally "living waters") into a vessel*** (Num. 19:17)



Just as water has the ability to move mountains, make arid deserts flourish and overcome all boundaries and obstacles, so too is the Jewish people blessed with this ability - provided, of course, that the water is flowing and not frozen into ice.

When a Jew is enthusiastic and spirited in his service of G-d, anything is possible. But if he is cold and apathetic, he will achieve nothing. (**Rabbi M. Shapiro of Lublin**)

Pardes Yehuda by Yehuda Z. Klitnick - Give Away from Yourself To Others

וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן עַד־הָעֶרֶב ***"And the Priest shall remain impure until the evening"*** (19:7).

Reb Yitzchok, the Rebbe of Vorka said that the keys to the Parah Adumah are the twin concepts of "Ahavas Yisrael" and **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ** / loving your neighbour. His grandson, **Rebbi Mendel of Vorka**, explained that this is because the priest who was involved in the purification process himself became impure through the same process that purified the person who turned to him. - Divesting something of one's own status in order to help a fellow Jew expresses his true love for that fellow. When one truly loves another, one is gratified by all the sacrifices made for him/her.



The Kohen here exhibited the paradigm of Ahavas Yisrael. With this insight we can answer the famous question posed by many seforim. If the Torah is talking about the Parah Adumah, why doesn't the Torah start the Possuk with "This is the decree of the Parah" and not "This is the decree of the Torah"?

The derech hatorah is to sacrifice for others, hence the primacy of the Torah in the possuk.

A similar concept of self-sacrifice applies to our own learning Torah. The epitome of learning Torah is **לְלַמֵּד**- to teach and help others advance in Torah. This can mean a real sacrifice when you have to redirect precious time from your own learning, which could otherwise be spent with a more preferred focus. But this is the **זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה** -"decree of the Torah" similar to the sacrifice of the Kohen: help others grow, even if it is at the expense of your own advancement.

Circle Time - Turkish Medicine

כָּל־הַנָּשׁוּךְ וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וָחָי ...***All those who were bitten will see it and be healed.*** (21:8)

Does a snake kill or revive? Rather, when Yisrael looked upward and made themselves subservient to their Father in Heaven, they were healed. (Rosh Hashanah 29a)

How did the copper snake heal the people who were bitten by the real snake? Was there no other way to get people to look upward? And shouldn't the cure have been different than the cause?

Yankel, come quick. Something is wrong with Tatty!" Chaim shouted. Yankel ran to join his brother. Their aging father was slumped in his chair, clutching his chest. "Tatty, Tatty, what's going on?"

The older man's mouth opened and closed, but he did not speak. Something serious was happening. His face was beginning to tinge blue!

"Chaim, I think he is having a heart attack. Quick, we must run for the doctor!"

This was in the 1800s, and there was no Hatzolah or ambulance to call.

"I don't know if we have enough time to get the doctor. It seems really severe. Let's run to the rebbe!" "You go to the rebbe, I'll run to the doctor. I'll tell Akiva to come stay with Tatty!"

The two men raced out the door, missions decided.

Yankel charged up the block and around the corner, heading full steam for the nearest doctor's office. On the way, he banged on the door of their youngest brother, Akiva, and sent him to their father.

In the meanwhile, Chaim ran full tilt to the **Divrei Chaim, the holy rebbe of Sanz**. Tossing an explanation over his shoulder to the shocked *gabbai*, he rushed into the rebbe's room.

"Rebbe!" he gasped. "Rebbe, my father!" Chaim was panting for breath. "I think he's having a heart attack!"

Unruffled, the rebbe looked up. "Not to worry, Chaim'ke," he said. "Your father is a wonderful man with lots of merit. Give him a strong cup of black, bitter Turkish coffee and he'll be fine."

Turkish coffee? Chaim wondered. That stuff was strong enough to kill a horse, let alone a frail old man having a heart attack! But if the rebbe said, the rebbe said! He gasped out his thanks and ran back to his father's house just as the doctor was beginning to examine the old man.



"The rebbe said to give him strong black Turkish coffee!" he shouted, swinging cupboard doors open as he looked for the kettle.

"Turkish coffee?" the doctor said in alarm. "That's the worst thing possible, after vodka. He is definitely having a heart attack and the caffeine in the coffee could push him over the edge!"

"If the rebbe said it will help, it will help!" Chaim said.

"Science says it will kill him!" the doctor insisted.

"So, what do you suggest?" Yankel asked. "A doctor has permission to heal."

"I have no solutions, but anything is better than coffee. If you leave him alone, he may recover on his own."

"A doctor has permission to heal, not to order that nothing be done," Yankel said firmly. "We trust the rebbe. Give him the coffee!"

"If the rebbe said… the rebbe said!"

The brothers brewed a strong cup of Turkish coffee and poured the hot, bitter liquid down their father's throat. Sure enough, his colour soon began to return to normal. After a few minutes his breathing regulated, and he opened his eyes and spoke normally. It was a miraculous recovery!

"Well… I never," muttered the doctor, as he walked out.

Three years later, their father had another heart attack. The same symptoms began to appear, but this time they knew what to do. They

quickly brewed a strong Turkish coffee, administered it to the patient and waited.



This time, though, the results were different. Their father clutched his chest tighter and fell to the floor. His breathing grew more labored and his eyes bulged. It was getting worse!

In terror, Chaim ran back to the Sanzer Rebbe as fast as he could.

"Rebbe, Rebbe!" he shouted. His words tumbled out in a rush. "My father had another heart attack and I gave him Turkish coffee like you said to do last time but it didn't work! What should we do?"

"What? Are you crazy?" The rebbe looked horrified. "You gave black Turkish coffee to a man having a heart attack? Don't you know that is the worst thing possible? It could kill him in a second!"

"*Oy vey!* What should we do now? Rebbe, help! We'll do anything you say!"

"Okay, so go back and give your father a strong, black Turkish coffee!"

Healing comes only from Hashem. The Torah teaches us that we can only be cured once we realize that. At that point, it doesn't matter what the means are — the cure can even come through the snake itself.

The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot.



Zos Chukas HaTorah ....

Rabbosai, this week we read about the Parah Aduma. **Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l** said that with all other mitzvos, one can try to understand the reasons behind them. The mitzvah of Parah Aduma, though, is impossible to even begin speculating about. Even Shlomo Hamelech, who was the wisest of men, was forced to admit that this was beyond him.

When one is faced with the concept of the Parah Aduma, one is forced to realize that his own knowledge is limited, and he cannot fathom the ways of Hashem. Let us take this message to heart and implore Hashem to stop the tzaros, the cholim, the issues in our community and may this year bring the coming of Moshiach speedily and in our days.

Saying Of the Week With Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"We may not understand Hashem's reasons, but we must accept His decrees."

Immediately after teaching us the laws of the *"Parah Adumah"* (Red Cow) the Torah (Bamidbar 20:1) mentions Miriam's death. Rashi (ibid.) says that we see from here that the death of the righteous atones for us like animal offerings.

The question is, why didn't the Torah mention Miriam's death after any other korban? Maybe this is because the *parah adumah* is a "*chok*" (incomprehensible to the mind), just like the death of a righteous person. While we don't understand why Tzaddik dies, Hashem has His reasons. If we accept that wholeheartedly, we can merit an atonement of our own.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS CHUKAS

Sage Advice by Nachman Seltzer



On one occasion, one of **Rav Yitzchok Scheiner's** relatives came to him for advice. Two different shadchanim had reached out to her parents, and both suggestions were from families who were interested in having her meet their sons.

One of the bachurim was a "regular" guy who happened to be tops in learning, well-rounded, and charismatic, with a great sense of humour. The other bachur was also outstanding in learning, but was a "mevakeish," with outstanding middos, whose only interest in life was avodas Hashem.

When the relative came to the Rosh Yeshivah, she said, "When I think of Olam Hazeh, I'd like to go ahead with the first bachur. When I think of Olam Haba, I think I may be missing out, and perhaps I should go with the second bachur."

In his warm, patient manner, Rav Yitzchok responded: "You're making a big mistake. You don't get married for Olam Haba. You have to make sure that you're going to have the best Olam Hazeh. Let's say you marry the first bachur. He's fun and he has a sense of humor. In the beginning, you will be sitting together having a good time and might be cracking jokes at other people's expense.

"But there's a good chance that down the road, he may be cracking jokes at your expense. I know the second bachur very well. He may not be as entertaining or as much fun, but he will treat you like a queen. He will absolutely never hurt your feelings.

"Whatever you cook and however you decorate your home, he will think it's terrific. I think you will actually end up with a much better Olam Hazeh with the second bachur."

The relative took his advice, which she has gratefully passed it on to others.

Nefesh Shimshon - From The Teachings Of Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"L

וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה ***They shall take to you a red cow.*** (*Bemidbar* 19:2)

This may be compared to the son of a maidservant who dirtied the king's palace. They said, "Let his mother come and wipe up the filth." Similarly, let the cow come and atone for the act of the calf. (Rashi)



Parah Adumah comes to rectify and atone for the sin of the Golden Calf. How does this work? What does one have to do with the other?

A sin needs to be rectified at its source. The cause must be treated, not just the symptoms. This may be compared to a crying child. How do we get him to stop crying? Not by holding his mouth closed, but by asking him why he is crying, to find out the reason for his tears and deal with it. So it is with the *Parah Adumah*. It comes to rectify the sin of *Egel Hazahav* at its root.

כְּלַל יִשְׂרָאֵל's intention in making the Golden Calf was not to engage in idolatry. They sought a replacement for *Moshe Rabbeinu*. They saw that Moshe did not come back, so they chose for themselves a calf,

due to its similarity to the image of the bull on the *Merkavah*, the Heavenly Chariot. So explains the Ramban. They were not looking for an idol; they were looking for a replacement leader.

The problem was they did it on their own without being so commanded by *Hashem*. This itself made the Golden Calf tantamount to idolatry. - Every holy, Divine matter that we do without a command from *Hashem* is tantamount to idolatry, because Divinity that is detached from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is idolatry. This is why the Golden Calf was considered *avodah zarah.*

The way to rectify this is by doing a *mitzvah* that has no apparent reason or logic to it. We do it only because *Hashem* so commanded. Thus, *Parah Adumah* atones for *Egel Hazahav.*

We see how important it is to do all the *mitzvos* only because *Hashem* so commanded. This applies also to *mitzvos* that make sense to us. When we fulfil these *mitzvos,* we should intend that we are doing so **only** because *Hashem* commanded us to.

Pick up the Phone

How many times do we say, "I should have called that person, that person looked sad, he looks needy, I could have walked over and smiled, I could have sent a text?"

But we don't always follow through. Life is busy. There is so much to do. But we find time for the things we care about. And if you care about people, then you'll find the time for them, you'll find the words, you'll find the heart.

There is so much time in a day, when you're sitting in the car, in a waiting room, on your couch at home. - Pick up the phone. To you, it's just a few moments; to the other person, it might change his whole day. **~ R' Gedaliah Zlotowitz**

Gematria

ותמת שם מרים ותקבר שם כ:א ***And Miriam died there, and she was buried there.*** *(20:1)*

Miriam's passing is told right after the *parah adumah*, because the *parah adumah* brings *kapparah* for the *egel* and the passing of tzaddikim also brings *kapparah*. The Torah stresses twice that Miriam died *sham*, there.

- **שם = 340**
- **פרה אדומה = 340**
- **מכפר = 340**
- **זה על עון עגל = 340**
- **אסור הנאה הוא = 340**

(Ba'al Haturim)

Chazu Bonai - Chizuk in The Parsha

ויקחו אליך פרה אדומה במדבר יט:ב

The greatest strategy of the **יצר הרע** is to try and convince us that our **מצוות** and **מעשים טובים** don't amount to anything, especially because we cannot compare ourselves to the previous generations who were so much greater than us. But this is a big mistake. Because while it is true that we grow weaker and more distant from **רוחניות** with every passing generation, otherwise known as **ירידת הדורות**, nevertheless we are able to reach equal greatness in our own way. The question is how?

רש''י at the beginning of the **פרשה** explains. Included in **הקב''ה** 's instructions to **משה** regarding the **פרה אדומה** are the words **ויקחו אליך**, which mean "take to yourself". Why does the **פסוק** say "to yourself" rather than just "take"?

Says Rashi: **לעולם היא נקראת על שמך, פרה שעשה משה במדבר** - the **פרה אדומה** will always be named after you – the **פרה** that **משה** performed in the desert".

Moshe was uniquely connected to the **פרה אדומה** to the extent that it was named after him. In fact, **חז''ל** tell us that Moshe was the only person who understood the essence of this **מצוה** despite the fact it was the greatest **חוק** that even **שלמה המלך** could not fathom.

The **ברכת שמואל זיע''א** writes that when **כלל ישראל** came to perform the **פרה אדומה** in later generations, they knew that they didn't understand it at all. But they knew that **משה** had understood it fully. So all they had to do was carry out the **מצוה** in the "name of Moshe", and by doing so it was considered as though they were doing it with all the depth and understanding that was available to Moshe.

Similarly when we daven or learn, whilst we know that we don't have the understanding or connection or depth of previous **צדיקים**, nevertheless if we connect with those **צדיקים** and attach our **עבודה** to their **עבודה** then we are able to achieve the same results...

Vayomer Eliyahu By Rabbi Eli Meyer Smith

Anything a Person Needs is Already Ready and Waiting for Him, Hashem Just Has to Open His Eyes to See It!

The verse in this week's Parshah (20:8) states that Hashem told Moshe to speak to the stone to draw out water for the nation.

We may ask why Hashem wanted to provide for the people specifically in this way. **The Sefas Emes** explains by citing the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 53:14) that says: "Rav Binyomin says: Everyone is assumed to be blind until Hashem opens their eyes." Chazal learn this from the verse (Bereishis 21:19) that says that Hagar only noticed the well after Hashem opened her eyes to allow her to see it.

The Chiddushei Harim explains that everything a person needs is ready and waiting for them – even if the person cannot see it right now. Once Hashem opens the person's eyes, he is able to see that it was there the entire time. Thus, the **Sefas Emes** explains that Hashem wanted Klal Yisroel to see that the water they needed was there the entire time, they just could not see it. This was to be shown to them from Moshe speaking to the rock and having the water flow out.

The Sefas Emes says that this is an important lesson for every individual. When a person is in need of a salvation and doesn't see any way out of his predicament, he should strengthen his emunah and recognize that Hashem has already prepared whatever he needs for him. Even if he can't see it now, he should believe that Hashem will open his eyes one day soon and he will see the great kindness that is waiting for him.

Sefer Divrei Yisroel also says that the best advice for a person going through a challenging time is to wait it out and not to try to "force the moment", as Chazal say (Brachos 64): "If one forces the moment, the moment forces him." One should sit patiently and calmly and have emunah that Hashem will help. If he believed that Hashem's salvation is ready waiting for him, he'll be given the chance to see it.

The Yismach Yisroel says that Hashem decrees that a person should suffer for a specific amount of time. Therefore, none of his efforts to help himself are able to help him. But once the time of suffering is over, his eyes are immediately opened and he can easily see how to get out of his difficult situation.

Rav Shimon Schwab zt"l explains the blessings we say every morning of "Poke'ach Ivrim, Who opens the eyes of the blind", and "Hama'aver Sheinah Me'einai, Who removes sleep from my eyes."

Seemingly, these two blessings are identical, as both refer to Hashem's opening our eyes after sleep. What is the distinction between the two blessings?

He answers that the blessing of "Poke'ach Ivrim" refers to the "eyes of the heart". There are people who walk around with open eyes, but the eyes of their common-sense and intellect are shut in deep slumber. They don't take Hashem's Providence to heart and don't pay attention to everything going on around them and don't realize how much goodness he provides us at all times.

Regarding this type of sleep, we daven to Hashem Yisborach that he should remove the spiritual blinders from upon our eyes and allow us to see and take to heart the Divine Providence that is inherent in every step and action in life so that we should live with the proper outlook regarding everything we experience.

When Hashem removes these blinders from a person's eyes, he can see that even the experiences he went through that he thought were bad were actually good and beneficial for him. This is seen in the verse (Yirmiyahu 30:7): "It is a time of suffering for Yaakov and from it shall come the salvation." The salvation shall come from the suffering itself.

Hashem provided a person with sense, and we can rely on them. The only reason why our eyesight may be obscured and we are not able to see with clarity is because of a lack of emunah.

Hagar, for example, was originally unable to see the well only because she did not have sufficient emunah. However, if a person does have a proper level of emunah, he will be given the ability to see the true reality.

Rav Simcha Zissel Braude zt"l (Sefer Maamarei Torah, Maamar 5) writes that the amount of Divine Providence that a person is able to see depends on the level of ruchnius that is on. Whenever Hashem revealed Himself to people, they were able to see as much as their level of ruchnius allowed.

We see this concept from the story of the Akeidah. The verse says that Avrohom "saw the place from a distance" (Bereishis 22:4), and

he told his two lads to stay behind with the donkey. Rashi says that he saw a cloud floating above the mountain.

The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 56:9) says that Avrohom asked Yitzchok, "Do you see what I see?" Yitzchok replied that he did. He then asked the two lads if they saw it and they said no. Avrohom then said, "The donkey doesn't see and you do not see. Stay here with the donkey."

We see from this that everyone can see Hashem's presence according to their personal level. Avrohom and Yitzchok were on a very high level, so they could see His presence on the mountain. The two lads, Yishmoel and Eliezer, were not on that level – so they could not see anything.

Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler zt"l (Hagadah Shel Pesach) expounds on this concept and uses it to explain the difference between an "open miracle" and a "hidden miracle." People tend to classify miracles that occur in a way that defies nature as "open miracles" and those that occur within the rules of nature as "hidden miracles."

Rav Dessler explains, however, that when one thinks about it, he will realize that even things that appear to be natural occurrences are also open miracles. In actuality, there is no real difference between Hashem Yisborach reviving the dead by breathing life into a withered body and Hashem taking a seed that withers in the ground and turning it into a vibrant plant. Both of these occurrences can easily be labelled "open miracles." The only reason that we think that the seed sprouting into a plant is not an open miracle is because it is common for us and we are used to seeing it. In truth, however, it is just as openly a miracle as a dead person coming back to life.

So what is the difference between a hidden miracle and an open miracle? He explains that a person sometimes sets the process in motion on his own. Chazal say (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 5:2) that if a person makes an opening for Hashem to enter that is the size of the eye of a needle, He will open doors for us that are as big as large

chambers. Hashem created this concept in the world that if man begins the process of creating the miracle, He completes it. On the other hand, He sometimes performs miracles without the person doing anything at all.

When a miracle occurs without the person doing anything to deserve any help, it is known as an "open miracle." When the person does have some merits, however, meaning that he began the process by making a tiny opening the size of the eye of a needle, the miracle that subsequently occurs is known as a "hidden miracle."

This is because the person believes that he deserved to have the miracle occur. What is hidden from him is the fact that he deserves nothing, and that Hashem is only helping him out of His great kindness. If a person puts forth his own efforts and makes an opening for Hashem, he will find what Hashem has prepared for him.

What he was searching for was in front of him the entire time, but Hashem did not want him to have it until he exerted his own efforts so that he would have enough merits to be part of a "hidden miracle". Once he tried on his own, Hashem opened his eyes and allowed him to see how to help himself and get what he needs.

He is saying that Hashem personally guides the world today, just like He always has. Unfortunately, we cannot see it and it is hidden from us because we are not on a lofty enough level to recognize what is really happening all around us. If we would be on the proper level of ruchnius, however, we would be able to discern that everything that occurs is really open miracles and we would see how He provides for us and gives us whatever we need.

The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Ki Sisa) explains the pesukim that say that Moshe asked Hashem to show him His glory, and Hashem's answer to Moshe (Devarim 33): "You shall see My back. But My face you shall not see" to mean that we lack the ability to see the inner workings of Hashem Yisborach's kindness (His face), which are hidden in His trait of strict judgment.

In other words, everything that has occurred from the day of creation until now is interconnected as one long series of events. We cannot understand what is happening now because we do not have a view of the full picture of how all events connect and create one big picture. We can only see His "back" – meaning that after the events are concluded the entire picture will become clear, and it will become revealed that everything was according to plan for our benefit. Until then, we must have emunah and trust that everything He does is for our ultimate benefit.

We need to realize that all of this is only the case while we are still stuck in this bitter exile. At this time, we cannot see His ways and we have to have strong emunah to recognize the truth. In the future, however, when we are redeemed from exile and Moshiach arrives, everything will become clear to us. We will understand easily how everything that happened over the years was for our own good. We will be able to see clearly how everything is part of Hashem's plan and was done out of His great kindness.

It is our duty to live with this level of emunah. We must instil within our hearts the recognition that even though we live in a time of challenges and exile, He is still guiding us and acting kindly towards us. We cannot allow ourselves to become corrupted by the difficulties and challenges of our time and to think that we know what is really good for us and what is not. Rather, we must accept without question that whatever occurs is for our ultimate benefit. We must completely believe that a day will come when it will all become clear and revealed to us and on that day, we will easily see how everything that ever happened was truly for our benefit.

Inspiration comes from within yourself. One has to be positive. When you're positive, good things happen.

Chizuk From Our Chachomim

This Thursday, **ט״ו תמוז**, marks the *Yohrzeit* of **Rav Chaim Ibn Attar** **זצ״ל**, commonly known as the **אור החיים הקדוש.**



Born in Saleh, Morocco, in 1696, young Chaim learned in his youth with his illustrious grandfather Rav Chaim Ibn Attar Hazoken **זצ״ל** . His father-in-law was a wealthy merchant who suddenly passed away when the **אור החיים** was 24 years old. The **אור החיים** suffered terribly for the next 7 years from poverty as his father-in-law's entire inheritance was taken by debtors and tax collectors, and the **אור החיים** was even thrown into jail as a result.

After stints back in Saleh and Fez in Morocco, he decided to move to **ארץ ישראל.** He stopped off in Livorno, Italy, for the next 2 years in order to print his *seforim* the **חפץ ה'** on various **מסכתות**, and the **אור החיים** , his famous **פירוש** on the **תורה** which the **דברי חיים** later said was written with **רוח הקודש** . He also wrote the **פרי תואר**, a **ספר** challenging the **פסקים** of the **פרי חדש**.

His **תלמיד** the **חיד״א** writes that one day he saw him *davening* at the **קבר** of the **פרי חדש** to ask him forgiveness for writing the **פרי תואר** and stating that he had done it **לשם שמים**!

He travelled with his **תלמידים** to **ארץ ישראל** but due to a pandemic raging in **ירושלים** he settled in **צפת**. In 1742 he finally settled in **ירושלים** where he opened a **ישיבה** for **מצוינים** who *davened* and

learned the entire day in their **טלית** and **תפילין** without talking any **דברים בטלים**.

His *sefer* **אור החיים** became extremely popular across the Torah world, especially amongst **חסידים**.

The **אור החיים הקדוש** was **נפטר** in 1743 on a **מוצאי שבת** whilst the **בעל שם טוב** was eating **סעודת שלישית** with his **חסידים**. The **בעל שם טוב** suddenly stopped and said, **כבה נר מערבי,** the light from **ישראל ארץ** has been extinguished.

During the Second World War, when Hitler **ימ"ש** was threatening to invade **ארץ ישראל**, **Rav Dushinsky** **זצ"ל** led a group of 10,000 *Yieden* to *daven* at the **קבר** of the **אור החיים** on his *Yorzheit*.

זכותו יגן עלינו

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

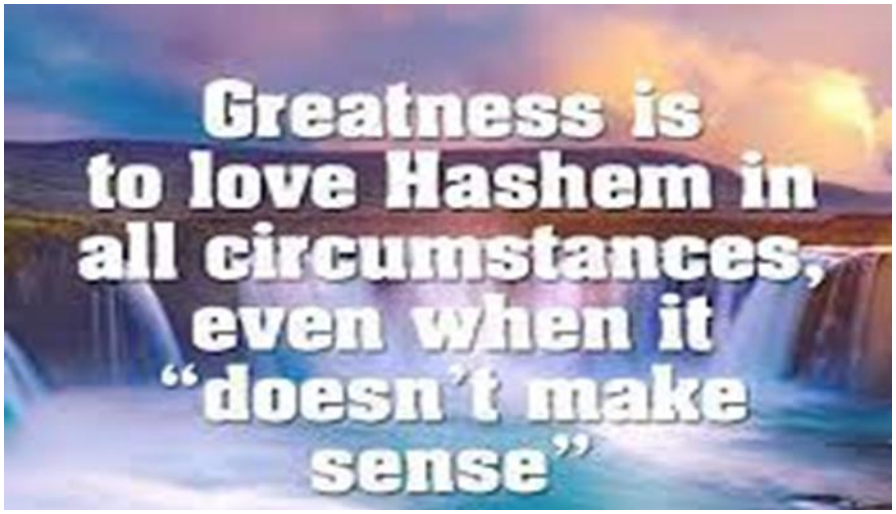


The Midrash teaches (Vayikra Rabbah 11:7) that wherever the word **והיה** appears, it connotes joy. In describing the fiery serpents which attacked the Jewish people as punishment for their complaints, the Torah states (21:9) **והיה אם נשך הנחש את איש** – *and if the serpent bit a man.*

Why did the Torah use the word **והיה** in conjunction with the attack of the serpents, something which should have caused suffering and not joy? (*Meshech Chochmah, Mishmeres Ariel*)

The **Meshech Chochmah** answers that whoever was bitten and looked at the copper image of the serpent which was placed on a pole was cured not only from the serpent bite, but also from any other illness from which he may have been suffering, which was a source of joy.

The **Mishmeres Ariel** suggests that the fact that they were required to look upward at the serpent on the pole caused them to think about Hashem up in the Heavens, which is a positive benefit of being bitten. Alternatively, he points out that after somebody has been exposed to poison, his body naturally develops immunity, so the fact that they were able to be healed and continue living with new antibodies was considered a source of joy.



Pardas Yehuda- Rabbi Yehuda Z. Klitnick

Why were the Yidden concerned about the Manna? **וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בֵּאלֹקִים וּבְמשֶׁה לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוּת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לֶחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל:** The people spoke against Hashem and against Moshe, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no bread and no water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread."

The commentaries ask, what was the legitimacy of the complaint of "for there is no bread and no water", when they had the Manna and water from the Well of Miriam? Secondly: Why did the Yidden term the Manna as "rotten bread"?

To give a better insight to this Parsha, Rashi quotes from the Sifri 88b and the Gemarra Sota 75b ***With this rotten bread***: Since the

manna was absorbed into their limbs [and not excreted from their bowels], they called it rotten They said, "*This manna will eventually swell up in our stomachs." Is there any mortal who ingests but does not excrete?*

However, this insight adds much difficulty, as the Yidden were now close to the end of 40 years in the dessert, and they consumed the Manna all these years, and they did not get sick. Why would they expect that now they would suddenly become sick from the Manna?

The Rebbe of Pashischa has a brilliant insight to our difficulties: Chazal teach us that after Miriam passed away, her well stopped giving out water. Bamidbar 20:2 states: The congregation had no water; so they assembled against Moshe and Aharon. Rashi quotes: From here we learn that all the forty years that they had the well, it was in Miriam's merit. — [Ta'anith 9a], Afterwards, Posuk 11 states: Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, when an abundance of water gushed forth, and the congregation and their livestock drank. Now the Yidden had their water supply from the rock.

The Rebbe continues, the Yidden realized that the water from the Well of Miriam was very holy, that its waters were the cure for the Manna, and as such were not worried about getting sick from the Manna. However, now that the Well of Miriam ceased to give water, and they had to drink water from the rock, the Yidden were worried that this water was not as holy, and would not be the cure for the Manna, hence, they became frightened that now they would become sick from the Manna. That is why they complained **אין לחם**, we have no physical bread, only spiritual bread, and we may get sick, since **ואין מים** we don't have the holy water from the Well of Miriam, therefore the bread is **לחם הקלקל** "rotten bread".

This explains very well this Parsha according to the Rebbe of Pashischa. This complaint was ill received, as Hashem was upset at the lack of Emunah. The Torah states: Hashem sent against the

people the venomous snakes, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died. Then Hashem told Moshe "Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole and let whoever is bitten look at it and live. This was to rectify the sin of Emunah, as now the Yidden realized that Hashem only does good things for the Yidden, and with the power of Emunah, of looking at the serpent, did they live.

This is a powerful message: whatever happens in the world, is only good for the people. Emunah in Hashem, is the only solution to navigate through rough terrains and to get on the right track of peaceful tranquillity.



Chesed - *Chesed*, along with Torah and *avodah*, is one of the three pillars that hold up the world. One can perform an act of kindness, be commended for it and move on to the next project. He saw a need; he acted.

What about the subject of his kindness? Was his act of kindness carried out in an impersonal, dispassionate manner – or did he use his mind and act thoughtfully? Did he smile and make the beneficiary feel like more of a human being and less of a beneficiary? Did he come across as performing this act of kindness because he must – not because he wants to?

That added smile, or follow-up call, makes a world of difference to the beneficiary and elevates the act of kindness, making it truly worthy of being a pillar for the world.

During that first *Pesach*, when the pandemic broke out and everyone was remanded home, it was the kindness of some which saved the day for the less than fortunate. Being alone is a scourge among older

people, and it does not fare much better with the younger generation. Some people have difficulty making and keeping friends, while others, by virtue of life's circumstances, are left alone to deal with life.

An old proverb focuses on the consequences of being alone, "***If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together***." People need each other and are far more productive when they can share their lives with others – who care. One needs only to walk into a nursing home and look at faces – especially the eyes – of many patients to determine which of them have visitors and which of them do not.

Parshah Pearls - It's the Letters that Count

וַיָּ֥רֶם מֹשֶׁ֛ה אֶת־יָד֖וֹ וַיַּ֣ךְ אֶת־הַסֶּ֑לַע בְּמַטֵּ֖הוּ פַּעֲמָ֣יִם וַיֵּֽצְא֤וּ מַ֙יִם֙ רַבִּ֔ים ***And he struck the rock twice, and a lot of water came out*** (20:11).



If one takes the letters of the word '**סלע**' (rock), and writes them out in full - '**סמך**' '**למד**' and '**עין**', the middle letters will spell '**מים**' (water). That is what Hashem meant when He told Moshe that the rock (**סלע**) would give its water (it would give the water that was contained in the middle of the word).

And that explains why Moshe and Aharon struck the rock twice, says the **Be'er Mayim Chayim**; once to remove the first letters of the word spelt out full ('Samech', 'Lamed' & 'Ayin') and once to remove to the last ones ('Chaf', 'Chaf' & 'Nun'), leaving the middle letters ('Mem', 'Mem' &'Yud') - **מים**.



The Parah Adumah

There's a very famous story in **גמרא קידושין לא** about Dama ben Nesina. He was approached by the Rabbis who offered to purchase precious stones from him that they needed for the **אפוד** of the **כהן גדול**. They offered an exorbitant amount of money.

Dama ben Nesina was ready to sell the stones to them, yet since his father was sleeping and the key to the safe was under his head, he would not disturb his father to get it. The next year Hashem rewarded him with a **פרה אדומה** being born to his flock – **לשנה אחרת נתן לו הקב"ה שכרו שנלדה לו פרה אדומה בעדרו** –. When the **חכמים** approached him to buy the **פרה** he told them that although he knows they would pay any price, he agrees to sell it for the amount of money he lost because of the **כבוד** he gave to his father the year before.

The question is: **הקב"ה** has many ways of sending people reward and money. Why did **הקב"ה** specifically reward him with a **פרה אדומה**?

The Kotzker Rebbe answers that after Dama ben Nesina refused to wake his father, there was a **קטרוג** in **שמים** because of the fact that a goy went so far for **כיבוד א**. So **הקב"ה** specifically gave Dama ben Nesina a **פרה אדומה** to show how much greater **כלל ישראל** is that their willing to pay a huge amount for a **פרה אדומה** even though it is something that they don't understand. Whereas **כיבוד אב** is something that can be understood (i.e.: look how much a parent does for a child). This removed the **קטרוג** on **כלל ישראל**.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Precious Proximity

We are taught that there is an unbelievable segula for a person to get his tefilla answered, and that is to stand next to a tzadik. This is why Chana stood and davened next to Eili Hakohen.

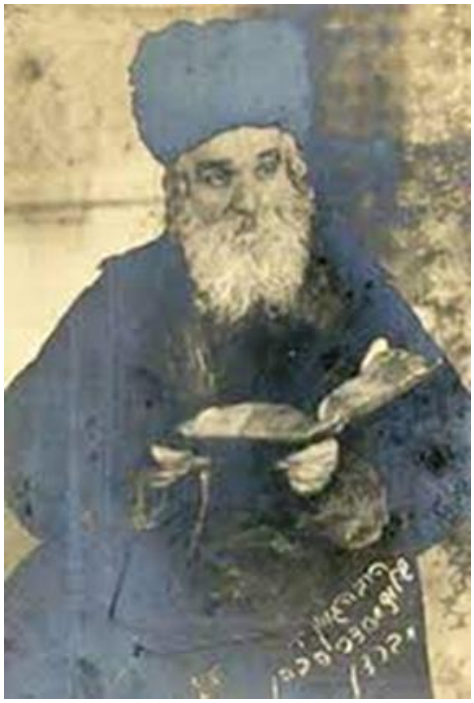
With this we can explain the gemara Bava Basra 116a that says one who has an ill person in his house, should go to a chochom, sage to daven on his behalf - **ילך אצל חכם ויבקש עליו רחמים**. *

Notice that it doesn't say **ילך לחכם** but rather **ילך אצל חכם**. This is telling us that is a great segula to be influenced from the bounty of the tzadik by going to him and standing in his proximity.

*[An interesting hint to this is found in **וְהֵסִיר ה' מִמְּךָ כָּל־חֹלִי**, '*Hashem will remove from you every illness.*' (Devarim 7:15)

The initials spell the word **חכם** while the end letters combine to spell the word **ילך**. This is alluding to this gemara that if someone has a sick person in his house, he should go to a chochom to daven on his behalf.]

The Maharsham (1835-1911)



R' Tzvi Hirsch Hakohen Shwadron testified about his father, **the Mahrsham** (Kuntros Ohel Shem, *Os Dalet*): "When I returned to my city of birth with my mother, he opened a store. His wife took care of the store, but he would also help a bit. Still, even when he was working, if there was downtime he would learn. And he reviewed the four sections of Shulchan Aruch 400 times!"

Similarly, the grandson of the Maharsham, **R' Shalom Shwadron**, writes that after the

Maharsham's wedding, he didn't want to become a rav or posek. He opened a wine store and was busy there with livelihood for about two years. In those two years in the store, he learned the four sections of Shulchan Aruch 400 times!



Emunah

In a letter, the Yesod HoAvodah (Slonim) zt'l writes, "Emunah sheleimah (perfect emunah) is ruach hakodesh."

The Yidden at the Yam Suf attained very high levels. Chazal say, "A maidservant at kriyas Yam Suf saw more than Chizkiyahu ben Buzi."

However, this wasn't their greatest achievement. **The Kotzker zt'l** says that the greatest achievement at the Yam Suf was their improved emunah, as it states (Shemos 14.31) **ויאמינו בד' ובמשה עבדו**, "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant."

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin taught that when one goes into business, he must know that the merchandise he decides to buy, the price agreed upon, and the merchandise he chooses to sell are all Hashem's decision and plan. When one has this *emunah*, Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin guarantees he will succeed in all his business dealings.

"Happiness doesn't come from doing what we like to do but from liking what we have to do."

Refuah

The Sfas Emes asks if the purpose of the copper snake was to remind people to look up at the sky and remember Hashem, why did there need to be a copper snake in the first place? Why didn't Hashem simply command the nation to look up at the sky to be healed?

The Sfas Emes explains that Hashem wanted there to be a physical substance, and at the same time, people should realize that it is Hashem healing them and not the snake.

This is the same way medicine works today. Hashem wants us to use medication and go through the accepted motions of refuah, but at the same time, connect our hearts to Hashem - the true source of healing.

The Sfas Emes writes, "The truth is that the [copper] snake had healing potential. Hakodesh Baruch Hu placed in it the ability to heal, as **the Ramban** writes, 'It is Hakodesh Baruch Hu's way to sweeten bitterness with bitterness.' Nevertheless, Hashem's will is that when we do natural procedures for refuah, our hearts should look to heaven, realizing that a snake can't help give life. They should look up to heaven and want to leave the prison of Olam Hazeh and nature, and to attach to Hashem…"

We are attached to the gashmiyos of this world, and therefore, we require gashmiyos cures. This is why we must take medications when warranted. But we should at least yearn for the true, ideal refuah - a refuah that comes from Hashem alone, the source of our refuah.

"Whoever does not see Hashem everywhere does not see Him anywhere." – Kotzker Rebbe

A New Person

Reb Boruch Ber Levovitz zt'l (the Birchas Shmuel) excelled in the mitzvah of kibud av va'em. When his father was ill, he stayed with his father every night, but one night he couldn't take care of his ailing father, so he asked someone to take his place. His father was niftar that night.

Reb Boruch Ber was broken-hearted. He felt that had he been moser nefesh to care for his father that night, perhaps his father would still be alive.

He went to the **Chofetz Chaim zt'l** for chizuk. The Chofetz Chaim zt'l told him, "After you do teshuvah, you aren't the person who did the sin, as Chazal say, 'When one does teshuvah, he is like a newborn child.'"

Reb Boruch Ber left the Chofetz Chaim's home, dancing in the street: "I'm a new Boruch Ber! I'm a new person!"

Speech

Moshe Rabbeinu was punished for hitting the rock, and the meforshim explain, in various ways, exactly where Moshe erred and what he did wrong.

Rashi teaches that his sin was that he hit the rock and he didn't speak to it.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zy'a said, "***Halavei that by my petirah, I should have intentions similar as Moshe Rabbeinu had when he hit the rock***."

He said this, so we should know that even Moshe Rabbeinu's lowest moments were far greater than we can imagine. Yet, the Torah tells us this episode so we can learn the relevant lessons.

Toothache



Reb Moshe Benzelovitz zt'l, a chassid of the **Imrei Emes of Gur zt"l**, had an excruciating toothache. To keep his mind off the pain, he kept crossing the street, back and forth. The Imrei Emes summoned for him, and Reb Moshe, a loyal chassid, went immediately despite his pain.

The Rebbe said, "I heard that you have toothaches. It is because you speak *lashon hara*. If you stop speaking lashon hara about Yidden, the pain will disappear."

Reb Moshe Benzelovitz said that this counsel healed him. He never again spoke lashon hara and didn't suffer anymore from toothaches.

One night he spoke *avak lashon hara* and was in excruciating pain the entire night. He immediately made another *kabalah* never to speak *lashon hara;* since then, the pain has never returned.

The Chofetz Chaim said: When one goes to a doctor, the doctor often says, "Stick out your tongue." - From the tongue, the doctor can see the root of the illness.

The same is with spiritual health. The tongue determines the spiritual level of a person.

Mikvah

This week, when we discuss the purity of parah adumah, it is a good time to discuss the purity of mikvah.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* said he achieved his levels through *mikvah*.

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l said, "If *mikvah* can turn a goy into a Yid, imagine what it can do for a Yid!"



A Welcome Visitor By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

The smile on the Rebbe's face could hardly be contained. His demeanor was always one of infectious joy, but his elation on this day was unusual. The Rebbe was at the berit milah of the son of a Bobover Hasid and had been honored with the distinction of being the sandak.

When asked about his incredible happiness the Rebbe could not help but share with the crowd an extraordinary tale of kindness and hope:

Meir and Rifka Zoberman were terribly despondent. Nothing seemed to work. Not the doctors' advice, not the berachot and, as of yet, not their prayers either. Their dream of becoming parents was fading away. Meir had been the beneficiary of berachot from the Rebbe on many occasions, and the Rebbe's blessings had always been fulfilled - until now. The young couple despaired and did not know where to turn.

With a lot of extra time on her hands, Rifka decided to visit local hospitals. She initiated many friendships on these visits, and felt fulfilled to be helping those in need.

One day as she was about to leave Maimonides Hospital, Rifka heard a woman groaning in one of the rooms. Peeking in, she noticed an elderly woman, all alone, so she walked in and sat down on the chair next to the bed. The woman, who seemed to be in her 70's, was not at all interested in making conversation with Rifka, and was even a bit rude, but Rifka somehow sensed desperation and loneliness in the woman's tone. The room, Rifka noticed, was bare - not one card, not a single flower. Just bare walls. Carefully, Rifka asked, "How long have you been here?"

The woman ignored her and stared at the vacant wall next to her bed. But Rifka would not back down. She prodded, until the elderly woman finally began talking, although with some resentment in her voice. Rifka was satisfied that she had won a round in this struggle. An hour passed and Rifka had even elicited a smile from the woman. As it turned out, this woman had no family and no one to whom to turn. Rifka promised her that she would be back, and she kept her promise.

The next day Rifka returned and was greeted with a smile. The two spoke for an hour. The woman had so much to say and finally had someone who would listen to her.

Day in and day out, Rifka visited with this lonely woman and slowly the barriers were worn down. Their relationship continued to develop - clearly the highlight of this woman's day was Rifka's visit. But as her happiness improved, her health deteriorated. Sadly, within a few months, her illness ravaged her body. Rifka sat by her side and cared for her as if she were a longtime friend.

Finally, the day came. Her breathing slowed and it was becoming more and more evident that she was going to die. Rifka sensed that her older friend was anxious and worried. Rifka assuaged her fears and noticed that for the first time the woman was crying. She wiped the tears from her wrinkled cheek and calmed her.

An uneasy silence filled the room when, finally, the woman spoke. "Rifka, I don't know how I can ever repay you for what you have done. I have no money and no family who can pay you for your time. But one thing I can promise you. After I go up to Heaven I will approach the Heavenly throne. I promise I will not leave there until the A-mighty grants you the child that you want." - And then she closed her eyes one final time.

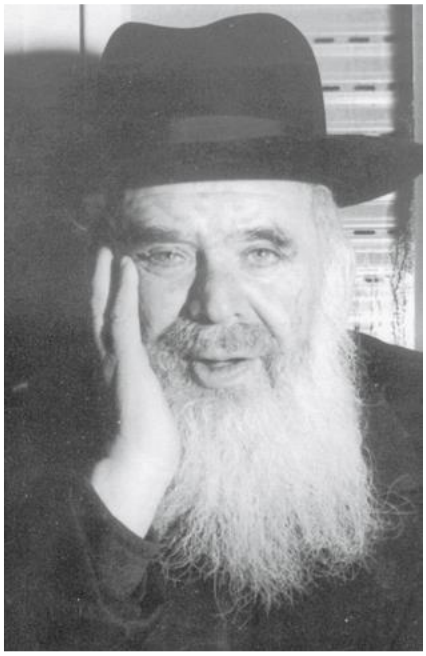
The Rebbe smiled at the entranced crowd, "And this is that child."

Getting It All In - The Eternal Wisdom of Pirkei Avos by Rabbi Yechiel Spero

The Mishnah (Avos 2:15) states, **רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן אוֹמֵר, הַיּוֹם קָצָר וְהַמְּלָאכָה מְרֻבָּה, וְהַפּוֹעֲלִים עֲצֵלִים, וְהַשָּׂכָר הַרְבֵּה, וּבַעַל הַבַּיִת דּוֹחֵק** "***The day is short and the task is abundant.***"

Simply understood, this teaches us that every day we have much to accomplish; we must not waste time. But the Midrash Shmuel gives a deeper insight. The "yom" to which the Mishnah refers is not merely our daily chores, but our lifelong task. We have much to achieve in our lifetime, and we cannot afford to waste it. A wise man once quipped, "People say, 'Time is money,' but it is much more valuable than that. 'Time is time.'"

Reb Shloime Rotenberg shared a story that highlights this message. In 1970, I was a bachur learning in Eretz Yisrael. After Tishah B'Av, three bachurim and I went to Netanya for bein hazmanim.



One morning, right around sunrise, we went down to the sea, which was accessed by descending several flights of stairs. Between each set of steps, there was a walled landing, where one could rest and enjoy the view. As we were walking down the steps, we saw **Rav Chaim Shmulevitz**, rosh yeshivah of Yeshivas Mir, leaning on the wall and looking down at the sea, which shone brilliantly.

Rav Chaim, who didn't notice us standing behind him, began talking to himself. "*Chaim, Chaim, der Aibeshter hut dir gegeben nuch ah tug. Voss geist du tuhn mit der tug voss der Aibeshter hut dir gegeben?* — Chaim, Chaim, Hashem gave you another day. What are you going to do with the day Hashem has given you?" He started crying and continued, "*Chaim, voss hust du getuhn mit dem nechtegen tug voss der Aibeshter hut*

dir gegeben? Voss hust du getuhn mit dem nechtegen tug az der Aibeshter zull dir geben nuch a tug? — Chaim, what did you do with the last day that Hashem gave you? What did you do yesterday that Hashem should give you another day?"

Still crying, he repeated, — "Chaim, what did you do yesterday that Hashem should give you another day?"

We just stood there listening to one of the gedolei hador, someone who they say never stopped learning, who couldn't understand why the Aibeshter had given him the gift of another day, since in his view, he hadn't made good use of the day before.

Chizuk – Inspiration

Rav Rav Avrohom Pam ZT"L once entered a taxicab with a talmid, and gave the address to the driver. When the driver set off on the route, Rav Pam noticed that the driver had not turned on the meter. Rav Pam gently reminded him to turn on the meter.

"Don't worry, Rabbi," responded the driver. "I will take care of you."

Rav Pam did not understand the response. The driver elaborated, "the money will come to me. But do not worry, I will charge you significantly less than the meter rate would have charged."

Rav Pam was very concerned that he might be involved in an act of deception. Realizing that the driver was either planning on stealing from either the Taxi and Limousine Commission or the owner of the taxi medallion, Rav Pam took an assertive, yet gentle tone with the driver. He told the driver that the meter must be turned on, but not to worry as he would be receiving a large tip in addition to the fare as shown on the meter, that was well beyond what the driver would have received if he kept the meter off.

Rav Pam was a tzaddik who was careful regarding every word and every action. He so much wished to avoid this act of deception, that

he was willing to pay much more than the quoted price. True, he could have availed himself of other options - but he did not, and instead stood up for the cause of Emes.



"The Bolsheviks Didn't Accomplish Anything!"

In Elul 5690 (August 1930), **Rav Yechezkel Abramsky zt"l** author of Chazon Yechezkel and formerly Av Beis Din of Slutsk, later of London, was sent to prison by the Bolsheviks. His "crime" was that he engaged in religious activities. He was tried and sentenced to five years of hard labour in Siberia.

Friends outside Russia, and especially the great gaon and posek, **Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski zt"l**, made various protests to the Communist authorities, and diplomatic pressure was applied to secure his release, but all the efforts were to no avail.

For almost fourteen months, R' Yechezkel was persecuted in a Siberian prison. Then, in a sudden miraculous turn, on September 20, 1931, Erev Yom Kippur, the Russian authorities came to him and informed him that he was to be freed that very day and that he must leave Russia within one month.

There was another miracle involved in this story. When R' Yechezkel escaped from the Siberian death trap and travelled by train from Moscow to Riga, the first person to greet him in the railroad car was **Rav Elchanan Wasserman hy"d**, the prized pupil of the **holy Chafetz Chaim**, who fell onto him with tears of joy. What R' Elchanan was doing there at that time was not immediately known to R' Abramsky.

After he had settled in London, he was privileged, once again, to meet R' Elchanan, who was there in the interests of his yeshivah. This time, they met on the platform of the railway station. While they were standing there they talked Torah and R' Elchanan spoke of the Chafetz Chaim.

Then R' Elchanan told him: "On Erev Yom Kippur of the year that you were released from captivity, I was staying in the Chafetz Chaim's home. We were studying Torah together. Suddenly, my rebbi interrupted the discussion, and without any connection to what we had been talking about beforehand, announced again and again, triumphantly, raising his hands, '***The Bolsheviks didn't accomplish anything; the Bolsheviks didn't accomplish anything. They were forced against their will to release the Slutzker Rav***.' Then, without another word, he resumed his studies with me."

R' Elchanan looked at his watch and noted the time. Years later he learned that this was the very moment when R' Abramsky was granted his freedom!

This story was related by veteran students of Slabodka in Bnei Brak, who heard it from R' Abramsky when he recounted the story of his imprisonment and release. He would speak about it each year on Erev Yom Kippur, the anniversary of his release.

His son, R' Mordechai Abramsky, also added that during the entire period of his imprisonment, the Chafetz Chaim would recite eight chapters of Tehillim each day to pray for his release. On the day of the release itself, however, he did not.

'Emunah doesn't just mean belief that there is a Creator of the world, that He supervises the world, that everything is in His hands and that He's our only address. Emunah is to believe that everything that Hashem does is for the best. Everything... Not almost everything... EVERYTHING!

If that's the case, there is no bad, problem or lack because Hashem does everything and everything is for the good. If this is true, we need to thank Hashem for everything.' ~ R' Shalom Arush.

From our Sages

וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן עֵץ אֶרֶז וְאֵזוֹב וּשְׁנִי תוֹלָעַת וְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֶל־תּוֹךְ שְׂרֵפַת הַפָּרָה ***The priest shall take some cedar wood and hyssop ... and throw it into the midst of the burning cow*** (19:6)

The cedar wood and the hyssop were also thrown into the fire. Cedar symbolizes excessive pride, and hyssop symbolizes excessive humility. Both character traits are not seemly in a person. The same way that one should not hold himself too high, one should also not walk around depressed all the time. A person needs a certain amount of enthusiasm and pride, as it says, "And he lifted his heart in the ways of G-d." (**Kli Yakar**)

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

Parah Adumah - זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה׳ לֵאמֹר



The reason why we do this mitzvah is because Hashem commanded us to do it. Rashi brings from Rav Moshe Ha'Darshan that the Parah Adumah was a mitzvah that was commanded to us, as an atonement for the sin of the Eigel. **כְּשֵׁם שֶׁהֵם פֵּרְקוּ נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב לָעֵגֶל מִשֶּׁלָּהֶם, כָּךְ יָבִיאוּ זוֹ לְכַפָּרָה מִשֶּׁלָּהֶם**: *'Just as they removed their own golden earrings for the [golden] calf, so shall they bring this [cow] from their own [possessions] in atonement.'* (19:22)

There appears to be a very solid reason for this mitzvah. So why are we told that it is a statute?

The eigel came about, because there was a lack of Emunah in Moshe Rabbeinu and The Ribboino Shel Olam. To atone for that, we have

the mitzva of Parah Adumah, for which there is no given reason – this shows **אמונה פשוטה**.

Rav Moshe Feinstein says (Dorash Moshe) that there are only two places in the Torah that says - **זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה**. Once here, and again in parshas Mattos with reference to Haagalas keilim. - **זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה׳ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה** (31:21)

Asks Reb Moshe, "If there is any mitzvah that is logically understood, then it is this. There is a scientific explanation as follows: If something goes into the earthenware vessel and it expands as it is heated up, then if the vessel is later heated up and the pores open, the absorbed items will be released. So why is this considered a statute? We can understand this, we can rationalize this.

Reb Moshe says, that although this can be understood, it is nevertheless exactly the same type of mitzvah as the Parah Adumah, and we perform it with the same Emunah. – Because the Torah told us to do it.

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Klal Yisrael complained about the Mann. **לָמָה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוּת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לֶחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל** "***Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no bread and no water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread.***" (21:5)

As a punishment for not being thankful, Hashem sent snakes to kill them. **וַיְשַׁלַּח ה׳ בָּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים וַיְנַשְּׁכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיָּמָת עַם־רָב**

מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל – '***Hashem sent against the people the venomous snakes, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died***.' (21:6)

A **נחש** and a **שרף** are two different types of snakes. A **שרף** attacks from a distance, by shooting its venom, whereas a **נחש** attacks by biting or crushing its prey.

Klal Yisrael then came to Moshe Rabbeinu, and said **חָטָאנוּ כִּי־דִבַּרְנוּ בַּה' וָבָךְ הִתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־ה' וְיָסֵר מֵעָלֵינוּ אֶת־הַנָּחָשׁ וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד הָעָם** – ***"We have sinned, for we have spoken against Hashem and against you. Pray to the L-rd that He remove the snakes from us." So, Moshe prayed on behalf of the people***." (21:7)

Moshe davened for them, and Hashem said to Moshe - **עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־נֵס** "***Make yourself a serpent***."

But Moshe Rabbeinu changes the plan slightly and makes a **נָחָשׁ** instead - **וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נְחַשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וַיְשִׂמֵהוּ עַל־הַנֵּס**.

וְהָיָה אִם־נָשַׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת־אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט אֶל־נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וָחָי – '***And whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze upon the copper snake and live***.'

The Maharal Diskin and the Ramban ask why did Moshe Rabbeinu change the copper snakes around, and why did Hashem say, **עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף** -"Make for ***yourself*** a **שָׂרָף**?

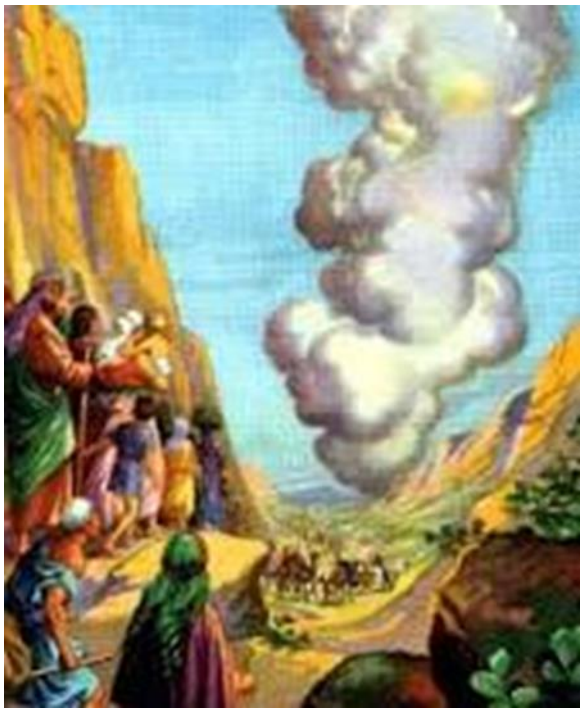
Klal Yisrael realized that they had spoken against the Ribboino Shel Olam and Moshe Rabbeinu. This corresponded to the two types of snakes. One was obviously much worse than the other. This is why he changed the Saraf in exchange for a nachash.

However, Hashem regarded that which Klal Yisrael spoke against Moshe – the leader of the people, as worse. This is why Hashem sent **שְׂרָפִים** to attack them. Therefore, Hashem said - **עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־נֵס** "***Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole***."

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

Amalek heard that the protective **ענני הכבוד** had gone away.

וַיִּשְׁמַע הַכְּנַעֲנִי מֶלֶךְ־עֲרָד יֹשֵׁב הַנֶּגֶב כִּי בָּא יִשְׂרָאֵל דֶּרֶךְ הָאֲתָרִים וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל ***- The Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the south, heard that Israel had come by the route of the spies, and he waged war against Israel.*** (21:1)



A goy came to the saintly **Rabbi Yisroel Ruzhiner** with questions about Yiddishkeit. He knew that he would not gain an entrance looking like a goy, so he dressed up like a Yid. He asked two questions:

"Why did the **ענני הכבוד** specifically go away when Aaron Hakohen died? And why are they called **ענני הכבוד**?"

The Ruzhiner said to him, "Scientists have discovered that when people sweat, they give off a certain vapour that emanates from them. Also, when two people have a strong bond between them, their vape also has a strong connection. The greater the love between the people – the stronger the connection of the vape.

It says about Klal Yisrael -**וַיֶּחַן־שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל – כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד** There were between 3-5 million people, with a strong bond between them. There was an enormous amount of vape, and this created the **ענני הכבוד**!

Aaron Hakohen was **אוהב שלום ורודף שלום** – he infused and enthused this concept of loving every Yid, and making sure that there was a close connection to every Yid. That's why the **ענני הכבוד** went away after his demise."

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

קַח אֶת־הַמַּטֶּה וְהַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעֵדָה אַתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְדִבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־הַסֶּלַע - "***Take the staff and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and speak to the rock in their presence so that it will give forth its water.***" (20:8)



Moshe Rabbeinu hit the rock instead of speaking to it. וַיָּרֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַסֶּלַע בְּמַטֵּהוּ פַּעֲמָיִם – '***Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice.***' (20:11)

Moshe hit the rock as he did previously, as speaking to the rock didn't help over here. Moshe got punished for this.

What was the message that Hashem wanted to show here?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein asks, "What difference does it make? Speaking or hitting? The result was the same, a tremendous miracle – water gushed out of the rock to hydrate Klal Yisrael?

There is a Medrash Tanchuma that asks, 'What was Moshe Rabbeinu actually supposed to say to the rock?'

He was told to say one Pasuk of Torah! Learn some Torah there!

We know that Divrei Torah are B'Nachas - דִּבְרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנַחַת נִשְׁמָעִים. A person can get a message across by hitting, but you can get the same message across by speaking (in the way of Torah – **בנעם** - pleasantly - **דרכיה דרכי נעם**.)

Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to teach Klal Yisrael, that the way to teach our children, is to speak pleasantly without resorting to hitting.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



After Aaron Hakohen was niftar, the Pasuk says - **וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל־הָעֵדָה כִּי גָוַע אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבְכּוּ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** - ***'The whole congregation saw that Aaron had expired, and the entire house of Israel wept for Aaron for thirty days.'*** (20:29)

How come everyone cried?

Because **אוהב שלום ורודף שלום** - Aaron was the person who made shalom between everyone.

The Meshech Chachma says that we learn from this, that there hadn't been a single person throughout the 40 years that the Yidden were in the *midbar* who had killed unintentionally. Because if this was the case, then they would have been delighted that the Kohen Gadol died, which would have enabled their release from the Arei Miklat. This also shows us that Aaron HaKohen was **the** exemplary Kohen Gadol, as nobody killed, during his tenure.

The Meshech Chachma takes it a step further and asks why the Pasuk uses the term **כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** instead of the usual **כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**?

We are talking about the 40th year that the Yidden were in the midbar. And as we know, every year on Tisha B'Av, the people who were between the ages of 20-60 had to dig their own grave and lie in it that night. Anyone who remained alive the next morning knew that they had been spared that year. 15,000 people were niftar every year.

In this last year, the expectation was that the final 15,000, were slated to die, however they didn't. So, when Aaron HaKohen died

that year, it was a consoling event, as they knew that they were being buried at the same time as the gadol hador was being buried. And therefore, they hoped to have *techiyas hameisim* together with him, and that Aaron's zechus would shlepp them along at the same time, so they were quite happy about his demise. But the women and children who were not slated to die in the *midbar*, they were incredibly upset, and **they** cried.

That's why the Pasuk specifically specifies - **כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** – 'All the households of Yisrael.'

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



Klal Yisrael experienced an event that they were not even aware of at the time and were only made aware of it later on. Klal Yisrael were about to go through Nachal Arnon (a short passageway in the valley through two mountains).

The Canaanim had hidden in the caves above them and planned to rain down on Klal Yisrael rocks and other missiles in order to kill them. The Yidden would have been 'dead ducks' trapped with no way of escape.

Hashem made a miracle that brought the two mountains together and where the Canaanim were hiding in the caves above, the other mountain had protrusions that fitted exactly into them – squishing them to death. Klal Yisrael were oblivious to this event.

Hashem then returned the mountains to their original positions, allowing the Yidden to continue on their way. It was only because of the stream of water, which they now had back, that they saw all the blood and bones of their foes flowing through the valley. They now

understood that this was a message to show them that a miracle had occurred for them.

They therefore proceeded to sing **אָז יָשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת עָלִי בְּאֵר עֱנוּ־לָהּ**. (21:17) This **שִׁירָה** was unique as they were unaware of what took place as it was happening, they only saw the results afterwards.

אָז יָשִׁיר means that something happened, and we will sing (future tense). When we say every morning **הַמֵּכִין מִצְעֲדֵי גָבֶר** – '***Who prepares the steps of man***.' - Some ways of Hashem we are aware of, but there are other things (like Nachal Arnon) where we are totally oblivious to the kindness that Hashem does for us on a daily basis. Therefore, we believe **באמונה שלימה** that Hashem is leading us safely at all times in order that we can carry out His will.

Pearls of Wisdom…*A Word for the Ages*



Rav Elazar Shach, zt"l, was once being driven to Bnei Brak, when the car he was in passed by the first skyscraper that was ever built in Eretz Yisroel, in Tel Aviv. When the Bachurim who were with him said to Rav Shach to take a look at the tall structure, he declined to look.

When they asked him why he didn't want to see the building, Rav Shach explained, "***I am not interested in risking losing my excitement for a Tosafos! When I see a Tosafos, it is a delight for me. I don't want to lose that by being fascinated by something else, like looking at a tall building***!"



Temimus

The first Rashi of the parashah states, "The Satan and the nations of the world taunt the Jewish nation, saying, 'What is this commandment [of parah adumah]? What is its purpose?'

Therefore, the Torah calls parah adumah a decree (חוק). I have decreed it; You have no right to question it."

In other words, parah adumah is a chok, a rule that we keep without understanding its reason, logic, or explanation.

This apparent contradiction is also in Rashi because Rashi begins by saying that parah adumah is a chok, and we don't know its reason. Soon afterward, Rashi quotes the Midrash, that the purpose of the parah adumah was to atone for the sin of the egel.

Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorke zt'l says that parah adumah is a chok. We don't know the reason for this mitzvah, and we keep it solely because we believe in Hashem. And now that we have displayed our Emunah in Hashem, it is this Emunah that atones for the egel. The egel was *avodah zorah*, a lack of *emunah*, which we rectify by demonstrating our Emunah in Hashem.

The Ability to Praise

Be so grateful that you have the opportunity to praise Hashem that you praise Him for giving you the ability to praise Him. ~ R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev zt"l.

The Chazon Ish's Yetzer Hara

Do you want to know what my main battle with the Yetzer Hara is? When I finish learning a sugya, with all the relevant Gemaros, mefarshim, and halachic rulings, I feel an extreme "laziness" not to channel all my thoughts one more time to write it down in a clear and concise report.

This "laziness" is my Yetzer Hara! ~ **The Chazon Ish zt"l as quoted in Torah Tavlin**

R' Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky zt"l

During the second world war when **Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky** was incarcerated in the ghetto, his face constantly shined with joy. Wherever he went, he spread words of encouragement and hope. **Rabbi Ephraim Oshry** asked him how he could be so happy when the situation was so grim.

Rabbi Lubchansky replied, "By nature I am easily frightened. Why should others have to suffer from my fears? I exert myself to remove any signs of fear so I should not cause anyone else to become afraid." ~ **Hameoros Hagedolim**

The Smell of Shabbos

It happened one Friday that the gaon **Rabbi Moshe Aryeh Freund** stepped into the kitchen where the Shabbos meal was being cooked. The vapour of the dishes filled the kitchen.

Said Rabbi Moshe Aryeh: "If women knew the powerful remedies contained in the vapour of Shabbos dishes, they would not leave the kitchen all week, staying there from Sunday until Friday. ~ **Zemiros Ateres Yehoshua as quoted by R' Dovid Meisels**

R' Kahaneman – Dreams of a Giant Builder of Torah

The following is an excerpt from Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's book, 'Listening to Hashem', regarding his last conversation with **Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman** before he passed away. R' Kahaneman was the Rosh Yeshiva and one responsible for re-establishing the Ponevezh Yeshiva in B'nei Brak, one of the largest yeshivas in the world:

It seemed to me, whilst standing at his bedside, that he was depressed, and I said to him, "I hope the Rosh Yeshiva understands what a *zechut*, what a merit it is for me to have gotten to know the Rosh Yeshiva. After all, everyone dreams, but how many people are able to realize as many of their dreams as the Rosh Yeshiva was able to realize? What was accomplished at Ponevezh is a glory to behold. Most people are fortunate if they realize 10 percent. The Rosh Yeshiva must have realized 90 percent. The Rosh Yehshiva must have had great merit to have had such accomplishment."

He looked at me and smiled. He then took my hand and said to me, "Nein, nein, Rav Riskin. True, for most people only 10 percent of their dreams are ever realized. No one died unless 50 percent of his desires remain unrealized, is what our sages of the Talmud say. But in my case, it was also only 10 percent that was realized. **I just had greater and loftier dreams**."

More than anything else, I learned from Rav Kahaneman the importance of dreaming for Torah and the importance of trying to realize those dreams no matter what it takes.

If you believe in Hashem who is invisible, you may well dream the incredible. And if you dream the incredible, with Hashem's help you may achieve the impossible…, but make sure to set your sights high; at the end of the day, even the most privileged live to see only 10 percent of their dreams realized.

Rabbi Shimon Kaplin

Eleven days from ר׳ ברוך בער

It's well known that when the Nazi's y"m invaded a town they would impose terrible rules together with *cheappering* the **אידן**, torturing them and causing them tremendous pain.

When the Nazi's invaded Kamenetz, they hadn't yet reached the town of Brisk, so they asked **ר׳ ברוך בער זצ״ל** if they should evacuate to the town of Brisk – forty kilometres away, where they will be able to live longer since each day of life is precious and has a tremendous **חשיבות**.

ר׳ ברוך בער זצ״ל told them to stay in Kamenetz. Of course, there were those who said, "What does **ר׳ ברוך בער** know…?? Kamenetz is dangerous and Brisk is safe!" and they went and evacuated to the town of Brisk.

One of the **גדולים** later related, "For the next eleven days the Nazi's did not harm any of the **אידן** in Kamenetz. During those eleven days the Nazi's went and invaded the town of Brisk." The atrocities in Brisk happened before they happened in Kamenetz.

This is what the **מדרש** means, **הם גוזרין לפני המלך והוא עושה** – the **רבש״ע** will decree according to what they say.

When a **גדול** says something we should never think we know better. Even if we *taka* know better, it's irrelevant.

Love of Torah

We are accustomed to thinking that love of Torah leads to toil in Torah. However, in truth we see that it works the other way around; toil in Torah actually leads to love of Torah. ~ R' Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l.

Three boys

A **איד** from Manchester has a son-in-law who lives in **בני ברק** who had many girls. He always longed to have a baby boy. He decided to go and ask **מרן שר התורה ר׳ חיים קניבסקי שליט״א** - for a **ברכה** to have a baby boy.

ר׳ חיים שליט״א told him, "You will have three boys!"

וכך הוה , very soon after his wife gave birth to baby boy, followed by another baby boy and then to a third baby boy.

When the first boy reached the age of three, he took the boy to **ר׳ חיים** to have his "**חלקה**", telling **ר׳ חיים** - this is the one you gave the **ברכה** to!

ר׳ חיים שליט״א straight away replied, "I told you three! What happened?! Have you got three?"

"Yes… I have three **ב״ה** …" he replied.

The **איד** asked **ר׳ שלמה קניבסקי שליט״א** – the son of **ר׳ חיים**, "What's **פשט** in this request?" **ר׳ שלמה** explained, "I sit sometimes by my father and I see what he says to every person; he doesn't even know himself what he is saying! He says the words which **הקב״ה** puts into his mouth!" **ר׳ חיים שליט״א** knew that if this is what he said, it must have become true.

It doesn't go with a **חשבון**, it's not for us to understand, the **רבש״ע** puts into his mouth the words, exactly what he is supposed to say.

Law of Attraction

Our sages teach us that joy is one of the greatest ways to bring blessing into whatever you do. Don't wait for conditions to change to be happy; be happy and then you will see the conditions change. - Joy is the spiritual law of attraction.

Check the מזוזות

A איד was once by ר' חיים who said to him, "My brother-in-law has been waiting many years and *nebech* he hasn't be זוכה to any children, he's been waiting for ten years."

"He should check his מזוזות" - Reb Chaim replied.

He phoned up his brother-in-law in Antwerp and told him to check his מזוזות. His brother-in-law didn't take this piece of advice too seriously.

Three years later, the איד returned to ר' חיים asking for a ברכה again for his brother-in-law.

"I already told you that he should check his מזוזות !" exclaimed ר' חיים !

There and then, before even leaving the staircase coming down from ר' חיים 's house, he called his brother-in-law insisting him that he must check his מזוזות , and lo and behold, one of them was פסול. ב"ה he was then זוכה to have children. We must understand that our גדולים cannot be manipulated, הקב"ה puts into their mind their thoughts.

We must appreciate and understand that there are those greater than us – there are those who are leading us. Even when our opinion is right, we must learn and train ourselves to be מבטל ourselves to the מנהיג הדור or גדול הדור.

When to Worry

Worry doesn't help at all – it only harms. To worry about something that has already happened is insanity. - The Chachamim taught us: All worries are forbidden. The only worry permitted is to ask yourself, "Why am I worried?" ~ Ralbag.

No such thing as אגב

Within the **גדולים** themselves we see how careful they were to be **מכבד** each other properly.

ר׳ יצחק הוטנר זצ״ל was once staying by his son-in-law in **רחוב סרוצקין** when he decided to take a taxi with his son-in-law to visit **ר׳ חיים שמואלעביץ זצ״ל** who lived in the **מיר ישיבה** , on the bottom floor of the flats where the **הנהלה** lived in.

After they left the apartment of **ר׳ חיים** , his son-in-law said to **ר׳ יצחק הוטנר** , "Let's go up one flight of stairs and we will go visit **ר׳ נחום זצ״ל** at the same time since we are already here…"

ר׳ יצחק הוטנר said, "No…"

They took the taxi all the way back to **סרוצקין**. Once they left the taxi **ר׳ יצחק** hailed down a new taxi and went back to **ישיבת מיר** to visit **ר׳ נחום**.

ר׳ יצחק explained, "There's no such thing as visiting an **אדם גדול** - **אגב**" because there is only one flight of stairs to climb! That's not the way you visit a **גדול הדור**."

We must have real and genuine **כבוד** to our **גדולים**, we don't visit them "**אגב**" because we are already here, we go back and make a special **נסיעה** to go and visit **ר׳ נחום**.

The connection

The lesson of **פרשת חקת** is: We don't have to understand everything, **הקב״ה** gave us something which has a reason, yet He didn't reveal to us the reason to train us that we do not need to understand everything.

Just like we don't need to understand everything that is happening in the world, likewise, we must learn from **פרשת חקת** how to look at **דעת תורה** – how to approach the words of our **גדולים**. We must be

מבטל ourselves completely for those greater than us, those are the ones which we must remain connected and be completely subservient to, and we must listen to their words even when we don't understand them.

We must be **מקבל** the words of our **גדולי ישראל**, and this doesn't only apply to highest calibre of **גדולי ישראל**, this is applicable to any person which is in a position of leading an **עדה** or an **עולם**.

We must train ourselves to be **מבטל** ourselves to the words of our **גדולים**, this is something we must be **מחזק** ourselves with constantly.

TORAH TAVLIN

STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

תורה תבלין



R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וְהָיָה אִם־ (21:8) עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־נֵס וְהָיָה כָּל־הַנָּשׁוּךְ וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וָחָי (21:9) נָשַׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת־אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט אֶל־נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וָחָי

The oft-quoted mishnah in Rosh Hashanah (3:8) states: "וְכִי נָחָשׁ מֵמִית, אוֹ נָחָשׁ מְחַיֶּה?" - Does (looking at) the snake give life and revive one's soul? Certainly not. Rather when one looks up and gazes at the serpent, he will be reminded of **הקב"ה**. He will then cling to Hashem and be **משעבדים את לבם** to Avinu Shebashamayim - and with that, he will become healed.

The Sefas Emes asks a penetrating question: Why not just skip the "middleman" and have the smitten person just daven directly to

Hashem? Why must he look at a snake in order to come to the realization that Hashem is healing him?

He answers as follows: The Rishonim write that based on the laws of medicine, if one is bitten by a rabid animal and then stares at said animal, or conjures up an image of that animal, it can be fatal. Yet, here Hashem orchestrated a miracle that the culprit itself - the snake - should serve as the catalyst for the refuah. Why?

Because Hashem wants to teach us a vital lesson. Even when dealing with a "gashmiusdike" refuah, one must remember who is really in charge. It is a test to see if we yearn to break free from the constraints of **הסתר פנים**, the pitfalls of teva and nature and realize that, in reality, it all comes from the One Above.

This, adds the Sefas Emes, is what the Torah refers to when it says, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף. In other words, create for yourself a burning passion. The "bren" of a Yid. That will enable you to experience life, not as a collection of natural occurrences, but rather of seeing the Yad Hashem in everything. **טבע** too is a **נס**!

Perhaps that is the deeper meaning of the next words, "וְשִׂימֵם אֹתָו עַל־נֵס " - place this "bren", this fire, on top of "nes" - miracles. Because seeing Hashem in darkness is much more difficult to achieve than recognizing the Almighty when it is totally bright and clear. May our lives be filled with this awareness and closeness as we serve Hashem with this bren!

"The way of the world is such that parents feel the pain of their children, but the children are oblivious to the suffering of their parents. Likewise, Hashem feels our pain, but we are blind to His misery." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zl



Cleaning Up

וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה. במדבר יט, ב ***They shall take for you a red cow.*** (*Bemidbar* 19:2)



This may be compared to the son of a maidservant who soiled the palace of the king. They said, "Let his mother come and wipe up the filth." Similarly, let the cow come and atone for the making of the calf. (*Rashi*)

This allegory about *Cheit Ha'eigel* teaches us an important principle about *teshuvah* for any sins one might do.

אִם רָחַץ אֲדֹנָי אֶת צֹאַת בְּנוֹת־צִיּוֹן If *Hashem* washes away the filth of the daughters of Tzion.(*Yeshayahu* 4:4.) When *Hashem* atones for us, this entails great compassion. It is like a mother cleaning up her toddler. If a toddler just got his clothing dusty, it is quite possible that a good friend of the mother will brush the child off. But if he made in his pants and got himself all filthy, it's different. That's not for others to handle. The best they can do is send the child to his mother. Only the mother, who loves the child dearly, will wash him off and change his clothes. Because she loves him so much, she can tolerate the filth and mess.

So it is with the Jewish people's sins. There are many of them. There is a lot of filth. No one other than *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is able and

willing to wash away the filth of all the *aveiros*. He loves us like a mother loves her little child, and He cleans us up.

This is why the *pesukim* speaking of *teshuvah* emphasize returning to *Hashem*. It is obvious that our return needs to be to *Hashem*; He is the One we distanced ourselves from. So why do the *pesukim* emphasize this point?

Because He alone is able and willing to cleanse us of our filth.

It is like someone saying, "Sweet child, go to Mommy." Similarly, we are told to go back to *Hashem*, because no one can clean up the filth of the *aveiros* other than Him.

However, there is a general Torah rule that *Hashem* treats us *midah k'neged midah*. As we treat others, so *Hashem* treats us.

Let's say we see what someone did, and we say, "No way I am going to rectify matters for his *aveiros* and mess-ups!" And if someone mistreated us, for instance by insulting us or saying bad things about us, we are even more likely to lose all respect for him and distance ourselves from him. But if we behave this way, *Hashem* might say, "Why should I put up with the filth and mess of his *aveiros* against Me?"

Such behaviour on our part could cause *Hashem* to distance Himself from us, *chas v'shalom*.

If we are patient and forgiving with others and show brotherly love to all Jews, and surely if we show compassion for our friends and their family members like a mother is compassionate to her own child, then *Hashem* won't pay attention to the filth of the misdeeds we might have done.

Whoever forgoes his personal sensitivities, Heaven forgoes all his sins. We can thus understand why *Aharon Hakohen*, although he enabled *Cheit Ha'eigel* to take place, had the merit to make the *Parah Adumah* that wipes away the filth of this sin.

Aharon loved peace and pursued peace and loved people and drew them close to Torah. He put up with the filth of everyone's fights and quarrels. So *Hashem* too, *midah k'neged midah,* forgave him, and gave him the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah.*

This teaches us that if someone loves all Jews, and puts up with them, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, too, will love him and forgive him for all his sins.

Why Did Moshe Not Do Teshuvah? - Michael Winner



I saw an interesting question, by **Rav Pincus** (of course). In this week's parsha, when the nation began to complain about a lack of water, Hashem told Moshe to speak to the rock and water will flow from it. Instead, Moshe hit the rock, which caused water to flow out, but also left Moshe with the punishment of not being able to enter Eretz Yisroel. This episode has left a lot of big people to wonder and write about what exactly was the sin that Moshe did to deserve such a punishment.

However, Rav Pincus notes that we do not see anywhere that Moshe attempted to do teshuva. We know that he davened and pleaded Hashem to let him enter, yet we know that teshuva is greater than davening. So, why is it that he did not attempt to do teshuva?

We know that the bigger the person is, the more accountable he is for his actions. Being that Moshe ranks pretty high, it's possible to say that he himself had no real grasp on exactly what made his sin

so great that he could not enter Eretz Yisroel. If so, how can he do teshuvah for something that he knows not of?

It's similar to how people, right before Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur go around and ask "Please forgive me for anything that I might have done this year." It seems pretty empty to me. If you're going to do teshuvah or ask for forgiveness, you sort of have to know what you did wrong in the first place in order to try to correct it in the future.

From this we see something else. Sometimes we see people, usually in positions of power, in my experience, who will never ask others for forgiveness. Nor do they ever change. The entire community can clearly see the person's faults, but no matter what, that person will never change. Perhaps, from here, we see why. A person can only change if he knows that he did something wrong and what he did wrong. Without that first step, he can never truly change.

We can learn from this the importance of always trying to be aware of one's actions. All the more so, if others make our actions known to us. If we cannot at least acknowledge that we did something wrong, we have no possible way of correcting it.



Timeless Truths

Harav Aharon of Karlin was once asked: "What did you learn in Mezrich from your Rebbe the Maggid?"

"Gornisht."

"What do you mean?"

"I learned from the Rebbe that I am a gornisht – a nobody!"

SEFAS TAMIM
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The first Possuk in Parshas Chukas (BaMidbar19:2) introduces the Mitzvah of Parah Adumah (red heifer) whose ashes are used to purify one who has become impure. This Mitzvah is puzzling because even though the Parah Adumah's ashes make the one that is impure, pure; it makes the one who is preparing the ashes to be used, impure. The Torah tells us that this Mitzvah is a "Chok" which is a commandment of the Torah that we must observe whether we understand it or not.

The Torah introduces the Mitzvah of the Parah Adumah with the words, "Zos Chukas HaTorah" – this is the Chok of the Torah. There is a debate between the **Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh and the Akeidas Yitzchok** as to what these words are referring to. The Ohr HaChaim believes that the Torah only means to call this particular Mitzvah of Para Adumah a Chok. The Akeidas Yitzchok believes that the Torah means to say that Mitzvahs in general should be viewed as a Chok. Accordingly, we should therefore observe them regardless of whether we understand the reasons for them.

The author of the Yemin Yaakov who was a student of **Rav Chaim Visoker ZT"L** of the famed Mir Yeshiva in Poland, expounds on the view of the Akeidas Yitzchok. His approach is that if we overdo searching for the reasons of the Mitzvahs, then we could possibly end up rationalizing away the Mitzvah when we think that the reason

that we found for the Mitzvah no longer applies to us. Therefore, we should treat all the Mitzvahs as a Chok – not to unduly concern ourselves with finding a rationale for the Mitzvahs and observe them whether we understand them or not.

This would have particular application to the Mitzvah of "Midvar Sheker Tirchak" – distance yourself from any matter of falsehood. We may say that the rationale for this Mitzvah is because telling a lie can be damaging and harmful. That being the case, we may consider that the Torah would permit one to tell harmless "white lies". We may think that telling a story with a lie or a bit of an exaggeration here and there is harmless. We may rationalize that telling a story is much more entertaining that way. However, white lies are still not permitted. Harmless as they may be, telling white lies can make it easier to lie in general and could make lying habitual. Therefore, to observe "Midvar Sheker Tirchak" properly, treat it as a Chok, observe it without delving into the potential reasons for the Mitzvah.

Towards the end of Parshas Chukas, Bnei Yisrael are told to send messengers to the nation of Edom to ask them to allow Bnei Yisrael to pass through Edom's land. Yet nowhere in this Parsha does it tell us the reason why Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael to do this. It is only later in Sefer Devarim that we are informed of the reason – Edom is the nation that descended from Eisav, and Eisav is effectively our brother (by being the brother to Yaakov Avinu). We must remember that brotherhood and not anger Eisav's nation. The Yemin Yaakov cites this as a support to the view of the Akeidas Yitzchok – even though this commandment to ask for safe passage was not a Chok (i.e. Hashem gave us the reason later on), we should view it as such and that is why when it was first introduced, it was introduced without a rationale.

Rav Mordechai Gifter ZT"L explained that reasons for Mitzvahs are called, "**Taam**ei HaMitzvos" because of the dual meaning of the

word "**Taam**". Taam means "reason", but it also means "taste". Hashem provides us with food to nourish ourselves with the necessary minerals and nutrients. However, Hashem could have given us tasteless or bland food to accomplish this. In His great kindness, He gives us food that also tastes good. By the same token, Rav Gifter explained, we should look at every Mitzvah in the Torah as if it was a Chok – that is, we must observe it simply because it is the will of Hashem. The fact that we may be provided with reasons to keep the Mitzvah is an "extra benefit" – no different than the extra benefit of Hashem providing us with food that is not only nourishing but is tasty as well.

אַרְבֶּה

After World War II, there was a terrible food shortage in Eretz Yisrael. Each loaf of bread was like gold. The heart of Rav Moshe Auerbach, the principal of a cheder, broke when he saw his skinny, worn-out little boys. He decided to raise money to give each boy an extra piece of bread during recess.



It made a big difference! Some boys gobbled up their bread, some ate it slowly, but almost all of them enjoyed every bite. The one exception was Meir.* Some of the kids noticed that he always threw his bread over the school fence. "Stop it! You can't waste this bread!" they yelled. But he didn't listen, so they decided to tell Rav Auerbach.

When the principal asked Meir to explain, he wouldn't talk. Rav Auberbach gently told Meir not to

do it again, explaining that if he didn't want his bread some other boy would surely be happy to have it.

The next day Meir threw his bread over the fence again, in what appeared to be an act of chutzpah and a terrible waste of food.

That night Rav Auerbach, knowing that something was amiss, went to Meir's home to explain the situation to his father. But instead, the father explained the situation to Rav Auerbach. What possible reason could there be to waste precious bread?

Through his tears, the father explained, "We barely have any food. When you began giving out extra bread, my younger son cried. He, too, wanted something to fill his empty stomach. So, my older son told him that he would throw his bread over the fence, and his little brother would pick it up later. The bread is feeding his hungry brother."

Why didn't Meir speak up? - He was embarrassed at how poor his family was.

Hearing the father's story, Rav Auerbach also cried. The boy's misbehavior had been nothing but a beautiful act of mesiras nefesh for his little brother.



Yeshiva On Sunday

In Eretz Yisrael, Sunday is a regular weekday like any other. It is a standard workday: government offices are open, and boys and girls attend school as usual. Outside of Eretz Yisrael, however, Sunday is a day off in many countries.

What is the proper perspective on giving boys a day off from yeshiva on Sundays?



On the seventh of Adar Sheini in 1973 **R' Moshe Feinstein** wrote a letter addressing the idea of giving boys off on Sunday. He writes that it is absolutely forbidden. Beyond the issue of *bitul Torah*, such idleness harms both the body and the soul. What is a person meant to do when he sits idle, if not fall into sin?

Conversely, when there is learning on Sunday, in addition to the immense value of *limud haTorah* itself, it serves to cleanse the heart and soul, drawing a person toward holiness and purity.

Faithful Financier



The banker and financier **R' Shimon Wolf Rothschild** (1828-1901), who was given titles including *tzadik yesod olam*, was someone who possessed extensive Torah knowledge and was deeply rooted in emunah. He generously supported yeshivos, the poor, hospitals, and many other charitable causes.

The Kesav Sofer applied to him the pasuk, **יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ** - an ox knows its owner—interpreting it as an allusion to Shimon Wolf Rothschild. Despite living fully within the financial world, he nevertheless "recognized his Owner," maintaining a strong awareness of Hashem. For this, he was greatly respected. The word **שור** serves as an acronym for **ש**מעון **ו**ולף **ר**וטשילד - Shimon Wolf Rothschild.

A Towering Tradition



Why are besamim, the spices used for Havdalah, kept in spice boxes shaped like small medieval towers, sometimes with tiny flags on top?

Long ago, spices were very rare and expensive. They were brought to Europe from faraway lands after long, dangerous journeys. Because they were so valuable, people stored them in the safest places—strong, fortified towers that protected European cities.

This idea carried over into Jewish custom. This is the origin of the tradition of besamim being kept in spice boxes shaped like medieval towers, sometimes decorated with turrets and flags.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Serving Hashem in This World

Reb Yaakov Kamanetzky zt'l explained the mitzvah of *pidyon haben*. **The Sforno** (Shemos 13:2) states that before the pidyon, the child isn't permitted to work. Throughout his life, he wouldn't be able to work if he didn't have a *pidyon haben*.

Just as there is a halachah that one may not do work with an animal that is kodesh for the Beis HaMikdash, a firstborn is also holy, and he may not work. The pidyon enables him to be involved in the work of this world.

Reb Yaakov Kamanetzky asks that if so, what is the joy of a *pidyon haben*? Isn't it better for the child before the *pidyon haben*, when he was holy for Hashem?

Reb Yaakov replies that before the *pidyon,* the child was living a spiritual existence, like when his soul was in heaven, but this isn't the purpose. We are meant to be in this world, struggle with the yetzer hara, and challenges, nevertheless, sanctify Hashem's name.

Pidyon haben is a great *simchah* because it enables the child to interact with this world, and that is the entire purpose of creation.



I want to share with you a very powerful story. Beryl was a businessman, but not the most honest of businessmen. And one time it happened, he didn't have much to sell. He didn't have much to buy. All he had was a wagon full of stones. He figured, you know what? Let me try to do a little hanky panky here. So he went and he picked apples off his apple tree, and he covered the entire pile of stones with a few inch thick layer of apples. So it looked like he had a wagon full of apples and he took it to the big marketplace in the nearby town. - And he figured, I'm going to sell it as a wagon full of apples. The buyer will never know that beneath the few inches of apples, there's a full of stones. But too bad. He should have checked it out. It's his fault.

So he comes to the big marketplace in the nearby town and he meets Shmeril, a Yid from a different town. Shmeril also wasn't

such a scrupulous fellow. And he sees that Shmeril has a wagon full of pears. So he says to him, you know what? Let's barter. You'll take the apples to your town. I'll take the pears to my town. And like this, we'll both be able to sell a commodity that's maybe not so accessible. Shmeril says, that's a great idea.

Beryl's all happy. He's getting a full wagon full of pears, while Shmeryl's really just getting a few apples and the rest of the stones. So Beryl goes, he takes the wagon, brings it back to his town. When he gets home, he realizes that only the surface had pears, but underneath the pears was straw. - He had gotten duped exactly the same way he tried to dupe.

But if you think about it, this story is such a **מוּסַר הַשֵּׂכֶל**, such a powerful personal lesson. We see another person. We see someone in our shul, someone in our community, someone in our workplace, and they just seem from the outside that they're so successful. It looks like they have a good marriage, great parnassa, a wonderful relationship with their children, emotionally strong. And we're like, 'I wish I could swap lives with that person.'

Maybe they see us and they think exactly the same thing as us. 'Oh, that guy's got good, Shalom Bayis. He has good parnassa. He's growing. He's strong. I wish I could swap with him.'

But neither of the two know that beneath the facade, everyone has challenges. Everyone has struggles. It isn't all beautiful. It isn't all perfect. And beneath the surface, listen, that's how life is. Everyone has their pekalach. Everyone has their struggles. - Be happy with what you have. It's who you are. Don't try to be someone else.

And this is so perfect for Adar. When Adar comes, we increase simcha. Where do we get simcha from? When you're **שָׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ**.

When you're happy with what you have. When you're not trying to be someone else. You're trying to appreciate your unique situation

with your successes, with your struggles. That brings a person to simcha. Because then you're true. And then you're honest. And living a genuine life gives us genuine happiness.



Too often, we underestimate the power of a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, or an honest compliment. These small gestures may seem insignificant to the one offering them, but to the one receiving them, they can mean everything. A single moment of genuine care has the power to steady a weary heart and to remind someone they matter.

Deep down, we all want the same thing: to be seen. Not glanced at, not rushed by, not judged – just seen. Real connection rarely begins with something grand. More often, it begins when we acknowledge others as human beings with their own stories, struggles, and silent hopes.

You don't have to be brilliant or wealthy to make a difference in someone's life. You don't need a platform, a title, or extraordinary talent. Sometimes the greatest impact we will ever make is found in the quiet decision to treat someone with kindness and decency – in the choice to slow down, to notice, and to care when it would be easier not to.

You may never fully realize the impact of your actions or the difference you made in someone else's life – and that's okay. Kindness doesn't need recognition to be meaningful. In the end, it's not the grand gestures that shape lives most deeply. It's the quiet moments of humanity we offer one another. Never underestimate how far a small act of compassion and warmth can travel – what takes a moment for you could last a lifetime for another. ~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810).





Dead On Arrival!!

זֹאת, הַתּוֹרָה, אָדָם, כִּי-יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל (יט/יד)

אין דברי תורה מתקיימים אלא במי שממית את עצמו עליהם (גמ' ברכות סג)

The **חפץ חיים** explains on the above **גמ**: If one wants to use his time for learning **תורה** he must imagine that he has died. This can be explained with the following story:

There was a **איד** who owned a very successful grocery shop which he and his wife managed. He was to be found in the shop, from early in the morning until late at night, serving his customers with a smile. This left him no time to Daven **בציבור** or to learn **תורה**.

Many years passed. His beard turned white. Boxes were getting heavier and people were talking more quietly. He realized that he couldn't run away from the fact that old age was approaching faster than he would have liked. In the not too distant future he would have to give a **דין וחשבון** for his actions... He decided to take immediate action in order to stand some chance in the **בית דין של מעלה**. The next morning, instead of going to the shop, he went to Shul, davened **שחרית** and stayed in the **בית המדרש** for two hours in order to learn **חומש רש"י** and **גמרא**. Only then did he go to the shop.

As soon as he entered, his wife complained, 'It is 10 o'clock! Where have you been?! Do you not know that the first two hours of the day are the busiest?! Where were you?' He replied, "I am extremely sorry, but I had a very important matter to see to."

From that day onwards the man went to shul, to daven and learn, for two hours. Day after day he arrived at the shop at 10 o'clock and always excused himself with the same apology: "I am extremely sorry, but I had a very important matter to see to."

One morning his wife's patience snapped. At 9 o'clock her husband had still not arrived, as was becoming the norm. She decided to

discover the whereabouts of her husband. After making some enquiries from the neighbors she was shocked to hear that her husband could be found learning in the **בית המדרש**. She quickly made her way to the **בית המדרש**. She could not believe her eyes. There was her husband swaying over a **גמרא**. She called him out and shouted, "Have you gone mad? The shop is full of customers, and you are sitting here learning?! Do you not know that we have fierce competition? We will lose our loyal customers if you do not help me to serve in the shop!"

He calmly replied, "My dear wife, what will happen when one morning the **מלאך המות** comes to me and says 'Your time is up.?' Would it be of any use or help to answer him that I am busy now and the shop is full of customers! Of course, such a reply will not be accepted. Therefore, from today onwards, for the first two hours of every day that I am not in the shop imagine that I have died. What does it bother you that I come back to life after that?!" (**לקח טוב**)

Rebbe Shimshon Pincus זצ"ל tells over an episode that he heard from the granddaughter of the **Choftez Chaim**. She had recently come out of Russia but was unfortunately completely irreligious. When she was eighteen years old, she had run away from home and went to university. [At that time the technological revolution was beginning to sweep across the world]

With youthful enthusiasm and ideological fervour, she went to the **חפץ חיים** and said, "Zeide, kum arois fun der tinkel-nish [come out of the darkness] the **חפץ חיים** peering out of the window, answered, [it was during the first world war when soldiers threw dynamite out of airplanes] "You see those airplanes? They will one day reach the moon. You see those bombs? They will one day create bombs that can destroy the whole world. That is what they make. We, however, make people, do you hear? Mir machen mentchen"

The Torah World



In the gemara when two rabbis are debating, the phrase **כולי עלמא**, *kulei alma* is often used to narrow down the scope of their disagreement. The gemara may say, *kulei alma lo peligi* (literally this means the entire world doesn't argue meaning even the disputing rabbis agree in this particular case). But why use the phrase "the whole world"? Why not simply say, "everyone agrees"?

We are taught that the world exists in the merit of Torah. Torah learning is what keeps the world in existence. So "*kulei alma*" can be heard as: the whole "world-system" of existence— everything that depends on Torah—stands under this principle. Through the learning of those rabbis, the world is being sustained. - This is the deeper meaning embedded within the phrase "*kulei alma*."

Another explanation is that when a person is deeply immersed in Torah learning, his entire reality becomes the Torah before him. Everything else fades from awareness. In that moment, nothing else exists; his whole "world" is the *sugya* he is engaged in.

Here is a story to illustrate this point. **R' Ovadia Yosef's** younger brother, R' Naim, once played a trick on him when he was younger. R' Ovadia would learn while he ate. Once, while R' Ovadia was completely engrossed in his learning, R' Naim quietly removed his brother's full plate from under his nose and replaced it with an empty one.

So absorbed was R' Ovadia in his learning that he actually thought he had already finished his meal!

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Rav Chaim Kanievsky's Advice

In one of the good yeshivos in Yerushalayim, there was a bachur from a good family who just couldn't learn. It was as if his brain was locked; the learning just wouldn't go in. But his ratzon was strong and he was stubborn. He tried again and again, with no success. Even though he was a yarei Shamayim, with good middos and a pleasant personality, he just couldn't manage to learn.

There was a maggid shiur in the yeshivah who was very close to this bachur. He sat with him every day to review the Gemara with Tosafos, but it didn't help. The maggid shiur was out of ideas. It really was a very strange thing. Generally, when one puts that much effort into learning, he does succeed, so he decided to bring the bachur to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, to ask for advice and a brachah.

When they got to the rav, the maggid shiur started to praise the bachur' s davening, middos, and yiras Shamayim, and said that even though this was the case, his learning wasn't going well.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky smiled when he heard the question, and said, "It seems that what is needed is a little more yegia baTorah, as the only way to acquire Torah is through hard work."

The maggid shiur answered that he was the boy's witness that he had worked very hard and put all of his strength into the effort, but his head wasn't very good and he just didn't understand. Rav Chaim turned to the bachur and asked him, "Do you ask for success in learning when you daven?"

"Of course, I always cry when I ask for this, but unfortunately, I haven't been answered yet," said the bachur.

"Take upon yourself to always daven in a minyan, and to never miss a tefillah even if you will need mesirus nefesh for it," Rav Chaim Kanievsky said, and concluded the visit.

The days passed, and the bachur finished yeshivah ketanah and was accepted into one of the best yeshivos, thanks to his pleasant personality and good middos.

One day, a few years later, the bachur came to visit his old yeshivah. He first went to the office of the maggid shiur, who was happy to see him. The bachur placed a kuntres of chiddushim in Maseches Yevamos on the desk. The rav flipped through the kuntres and found it full of wisdom and depth. It was beautifully and clearly written, and it was obvious that the author was very talented; he had to be a big talmid chacham.

"Which rav wrote this?" the maggid shiur asked. "It seems that he must be a very chashuve person."

The bachur didn't understand the question. "What does the maggid shiur mean by 'Who wrote it?' I wrote and put together the kuntres, with siyata d'Shmaya. That's the reason I came here, to show you my first project. I figured that after all the hard work the maggid shiur invested in me, he would be happy to see the results."

The rav was thrilled. "You are the author? But just a few years ago, when you learned here in yeshivah ketanah, you understood almost nothing. You had trouble keeping even one Tosafos in your head! How did such a drastic change come about?"

With a mysterious smile, the bachur told the rav the story as in happened:

"In the beginning of the year at yeshivah ketanah, I really didn't understand a thing, as was the case up until then. The other boys grew and matured in learning by the day, and I remained behind, stuck almost at the level of a boy in cheder.

"Toward the end of the zman, the yeshivah planned an outing to the mekomos hakedoshim up North. It was Thursday, Erev Rosh Chodesh. The trip took until very late at night, and when I got home,

I sat with my parents and told them about the trip. We chatted for a while, and I didn't realize that the hour was getting later and later.

"Suddenly, I caught myself. I panicked! I hadn't davened Ma'ariv yet! The hands of the clock showed three in the morning. I was very conscious of the obligation I had taken upon myself at the behest of Rav Chaim — that I wouldn't miss one minyan, no matter what — but I didn't know what I could do about it at this hour. In all the numerous minyanim in Ramot, there was no minyan to be found this late. The only place to catch a minyan that late was in Zichron Moshe, in the center of town, but how would I get there with no public transportation running?

"I decided to do hishdadlus. I left the house and started to walk down the highway; I would try to hitchhike. But the street was almost empty. The few cars that passed flew by without stopping. After a long time waiting in the fierce cold of Yerushalayim, I decided that if, within ten minutes, a car would stop to pick me up, great. But if not, I would go back home. I would have no choice but to daven alone.

"Seven and a half minutes passed, and the car of someone I knew from the neighborhood passed by. 'Where to?' he asked.

"Zichron Moshe," I replied.

"Very good, I'm also going there for Ma'ariv."

"When we got there, there were five men who hadn't davened yet waiting there. With us, there were still three missing. Some of them, seeing that there was no minyan, wanted to go home, but I begged them to stay just a bit more, telling them that I absolutely must daven in a minyan. In the end, there was a minyan, and the davening started.

It was a very special tefillah. I had kavuanah on every word, and when I got to Chonein Hada'as, my heart opened. I started to cry,

and cried and cried, huddled in the corner of the shul. I had never cried like that before.

"I stayed there in the corner for a very long time. Just the brachah of Chonein Had'as took about three quarters of an hour. When I finally finished, I saw that the other members of the minyan had gone home long ago. I came out of this tefillah a changed man. I felt as if I had been created anew.

"It was already close to vasikin, and I decided to stay for Shacharis. Meanwhile, I took down a Gemara Sanhedrin and began to learn. To my great surprise, I suddenly felt that I understood it! My mind had opened, all at once! I felt that the learning was sweet, so sweet — as I'd never felt before. This was the first time in my life that I had read the Tosofos and understood its deep meaning.

"During Shacharis, when I got to the brachah of Ahavah Rabbah, my heart again opened wide. Avinu av harachaman, hameracheim racheim aleinu, v'sein blbeinu bichah, l'havin ul'haskil...wh'are eneinu b'orasoecha — "and light up our eyes with Your Torah!" Again, when I got to Chonein Hada'as, I cried and cried. The crying of the previous night's Ma'ariv paled in comparison.

"After this tefillah, I went home, ate breakfast, and immediately went to my room. I took out my Gemara and began learning passionately. I didn't stop until Shabbos, when I left the room to go to Minchah in shul.

"After davening, I went home with my father and we had the seudah. It was a happy and joyful seudah for the whole family. After the meal, my father turned to me and asked me to go to sleep; I had been awake already for a day and a half.

"'I'll just learn a little more, and then I'll go to sleep,' I said. But 'a little bit' stretched until we had to daven Shacharis. I couldn't bring myself to stop learning, so great was my thirst for Torah. I went to Shacharis with my father, and after the seudah, my father

saw that I was already weak and run-down. He forced me to sleep as much as I would need.

"From that day on, the shaarei Torah and shaarei orah were open before me. I became a big masmid, with deep understanding and clear explanations on every subject. I was zocheh to great siyata d'Shmaya and amazing growth in Torah."

וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם... וַנַּפְשֵׁנוּ קָצָה, בַּלֶּחֶם הַקְּלֹקֵל. וַיְשַׁלַּח ה' בָּעָם, אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים, וַיְנַשְּׁכוּ, אֶת־הָעָם (כא/ה)

רש"י explains the **אידן**'s complaint was as follows: How is it possible for a living being to survive if it eats but does not relieve itself regularly?!

ה' punished them by sending snakes which bit them. What is the **מידה כנגד מידה**? The **גמ' גיטין נו** which writes; there is one living creature that eats and does not have to relieve itself: The **יתוש** (gnat, a small fly). That being the case the whole complaint of the **אידן** falls away.

The **אידן** chose to ignore the existence of the **יתוש** and they complained. Therefore **ה'** sent them snakes to bite them. The **גמ' שבת דף עז**: writes that every creature has a purpose. The benefit of a **יתוש** is that if one is bitten by a snake, he should crush up a **יתוש** and put it over the bite as a remedy. (**ע"פ רש"י שם**).

That was the **מידה כנגד מידה** of the punishment that **ה'** sent the **אידן**. They chose to ignore the fact that the **יתוש** exist and now they were all searching for the **יתוש** to heal their snake bites.

"Life is an ongoing struggle with one's evil inclination. One must forever be poised with for battle and never discouraged by failure." - The Chofetz Chaim, Zt''l, Sefer Shmiras Haloshon.



If you see someone that you don't know that well who's crying in a side corner in **שול** saying **תהלים**, should you go ask him what's bothering him? Or it's none of your business? What would you say?

Let me share with you a story on this point. My **רבי רב משה שפירא זצ"ל** said it over in the name of his father-in-law **רב אהרן סטולצקי**, who heard it from the **חפץ חיים** himself. It's a not-known story, but this came from the mouth of the **חפץ חיים**.

Two hundred some years ago, there was a **איד** in **שול** before **מנחה** on **שבת** crying his heart out with **תהלים**. Another **איד** approached him and asked him, "What's bothering you?"

The first **איד** said, "Thank you for asking, but you cannot help me."

So the second **איד**, "Maybe I could help you?"

Said the first one, "No you cannot."

"But maybe by just sharing it with me it will be a help."

"Okay, you're insisting so much that you want to help, I'll tell you. I don't have a penny to my name, and I have a daughter who reached a long time ago marriageable age. And nothing's moving. I saw her now at home for **שבת**, I don't know why it hit me this **שבת** more than others, I just couldn't hold back my tears. And I didn't want her to see that I'm crying, so I came to here to cry. Could you help me?"

Said the first **איד**, "You know, interesting, I have a son who also reached the marriageable age and I also don't have a penny to my name. So we have a lot in common. Maybe they should meet."

They met, and they got married. - Do you know who they were? The children that they were **זוכה** to have?

The **קצות החושן**, the **תרומת הכרי**, the **קונטרס הספקות**. These are **ספרים** that changed the world of **תורה**. And the **קצות החושן** particularly is mentioned every day over 50,000 times. And you know why it happened?

So I asked my **רבי**, "What's the moral of the story?"

So **רב משה שפירא** told me - "Look how **תהלים** works."

I said, "Fine, that's the merit of one father. What's the merit of the one who did not say **תהלים**?"

So **רב משה** told me, "**לא יודע**."

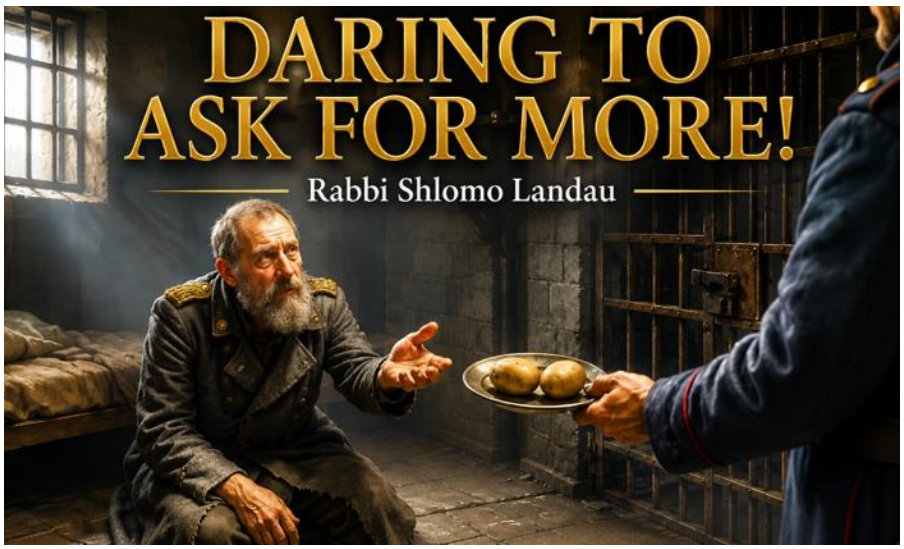
I said, "**רבי**, do I have permission maybe to offer something?"

"Yeah, go ahead."

So I humbly suggested: look what words did. It's not only that he sympathized from far, the other father. He went and asked him, and said, "What's bothering you?" And he made a communication with him, and he conversed with him, and that opened the first father's heart when he saw that someone cares so much.

Words that show that I care are always words that you should be saying, even if you're not familiar with the other party.

"The section of Chukas stands at the center of a wilderness journey filled with challenges, complaints, and uncertainty. Yet every stage was directed by Hashem with perfect precision. A Jew may not always understand the road before him, but he must know that every detour, every delay, and every difficulty is part of a Divine plan leading him toward his ultimate destination." ~ Chofetz Chaim.



When revolutionaries overthrew the Russian Tsar, they took his throne, seized his wealth, and locked him in a prison cell in Tobolsk. Imprisoned under harsh conditions, the former ruler of Russia begged his captors for two extra potatoes a day. News of his request spread across the country and people laughed at him. The man who'd once commanded an empire was now begging for two potatoes.

But when the Chofetz Chaim heard this, he shared that he didn't laugh. Why would I, said the Chofetz Chaim? The Tsar had lost everything. His enemies controlled his future. Two potatoes were all he could hope to get.

But us, we stand before the Master of the Universe who tells us, open your mouth wide and I will fill it, הַרְחֶב־פִּיךָ וַאֲמַלְאֵהוּ. Hashem invites us to ask. He encourages us to dream. He has no limits.

Yet what do we ask for? A little more money, a little more comfort, a little more convenience, two more potatoes?

The Tsar's request made perfect sense. The real question is, what's our excuse? We're children of the Melech Malchei Hamelachim, the King of Kings. When we stand before Hashem, the question isn't how much He can give. The question is whether we remember whose children we are.

"A chok teaches a person to serve Hashem with trust, not merely with understanding." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.



Loving The Torah - The Story of Reb Dovid Feinstein by Libby Lazewnik

On the morning of September 11, 2001, when America was attacked by terrorists who hijacked airplanes, the center of the attack was in lower Manhattan, less than two miles from the yeshivah. As the world watched, something horrifying and utterly unimaginable happened. The Twin Towers, then the tallest buildings in the United States, were attacked. In seconds, they crumbled to the ground, leaving thousands dead.

The talmidim were in the middle of morning seder when the beis midrash shook from the first blast. Then came a second blast. As both the majestic towers came tumbling down, the street became filled with thick smoke. The talmidim stood in front of the yeshivah in shock. The Rosh Yeshivah came outside, too. The boys waited to see his reaction.

Reb Dovid looked toward the fallen buildings and gazed at the scene for a few moments. Then he turned around and went back inside. He opened his Gemara and said quietly, "Talmud Torah is the biggest zechus of all." With that, he continued morning seder, giving his shiur as usual while clouds of gray smoke hovered outside the beis midrash windows.

Reb Dovid didn't keep many sefarim around. All he needed was the Gemara in front of him and a notebook and pen handy to write down his thoughts. But he did keep something important in his shtender — candles and matches. In case of a power outage, he wanted to

keep on learning without wasting a moment. And time was something he never wasted.



R' Dovid speaking with his father, R' Moshe

Apart from mastering the masechta on which he was saying shiur, he also made sure to keep up with the daily daf yomi, since people always came over to him with questions about that. In addition, he made a few other siyumim each year to mark certain yahrzeits. And he was careful to learn the parashas hashavua each week, with Rashi, Targum, and the haftarah.

With his son R' Berel, he learned the Talmud Yerushalmi. He also went through the Mishnah Berurah on a regular basis. He taught Nach to his high school students and he said Tehillim frequently.

In Europe, he would say, even the simplest Jew knew how important it is to say Tehillim. Here in America, sadly, it has become less common.

The only way he could keep up his busy learning schedule and be available to answer the many halachic questions that came his way each day was to protect each moment fiercely. Only those who were closest to him knew where to find him when he slipped out of yeshivah each afternoon. He would walk over to the Otzar Hasefarim bookstore on Canal Street. The store owners, his close friends Jack and Gloria Goldman, were there to welcome him. In a private room at the back of the store, Reb Dovid could learn uninterrupted for a while before it was time to return to the yeshivah. - It was like a taste of Gan Eden!

One time, a friend of the yeshivah decided to donate a Sefer Torah to an out-of-town shul. There would be a celebration with a lavish seudah, and the donor was very eager for Reb Dovid to be there. Besides paying for the plane ticket, he said that he would give the Rosh Yeshivah $50,000 for coming.

Reb Dovid smiled politely and explained that he couldn't come, as he had a learning seder at that time. - No amount of money could compete with that!



102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Only Kosher

In a far-off city in America, a yeshivah elementary school was opened that provided an uncompromising, Torah-true education. That small town had a nice kehillah of a few dozen families of talmidei chachamim and yirei Shamayim. The respected yeshivah principal, an energetic and talented man, was one of the community's askanim, and worked very hard to get more and more of the local children to attend the yeshivah.

While visiting the homes of local Jews who had grown distant from Torah and mitzvos, he came to the home of a man who had been very far from Yiddishkeit since his youth. It seemed that his father did not provide him with a Jewish education, and aside from the fact that he was a Jew, the man knew almost nothing!

The man received the principal pleasantly and with respect, but when he heard the reason for his visit, he was met with complete resistance. "There's no reason for my children to get a different education than what I received," the man stated. "What was good for me is good for my children."

Despite his refusal to send his children to the yeshivah, he made it clear that he would remain close to the local Torah institutions, and he made a very respectable donation to the yeshivah.

During the visit, the host offered the principal a steaming cup of tea, according to the common practice in the house of certain families to honor their visitors with a glass of tea.

The principal politely declined the offer due to his concern regarding kashrus in that completely secular home. The man of the house, recognizing his guest's concerns, said, "As far as kashrus, you can rely on me with no qualms, for there is one mitzvah we keep wholeheartedly. That's the mitzvah of kashrus, which we keep strictly. We only buy the best hechsherim, and are always particular to keep milk and meat separate. Every year before Pesach, an important rabbi comes to kasher the kitchen for Yom Tov. And so, you can rely on the kashrus completely!"

The principal was quite surprised, wondering how kashrus came to a completely secular home.

The man told him his story:

"In my youth, I was drafted into the U.S. Army, and during World War II, I was sent to free occupied Poland from the accursed hands of the Nazis. Though I did not know anything about Judaism, I had a warm Jewish heart, and I wanted to save as many Jews as possible, so I joined the unit liberating the camps. We went from camp to camp with lots of bars of chocolate, and everywhere we went, the forlorn Jews were happy to see us.

"In one of the camps, I was shocked to discover a wizened, gaunt man sprawled on the ground, on the verge of death. I hurried to put something into his mouth from the vast supply of food in my backpack. I tried to feed him, but the man refused. He closed his mouth, and with his last bit of strength, murmured, 'Nor kosher!'

"In my ignorance, I did not know or understand what kosher was, and I tried again to put the food into his mouth. However, he refused again and began murmuring quietly. I put my ear to his mouth and heard him repeating the same two unclear words: 'Nor kosher!'

As I tried to understand what the man was telling me, the poor fellow breathed his last.

"I shuddered and my entire body trembled at my failure to save a Jewish life because I couldn't understand him. I decided that when I returned to America, I'd immediately find out the meaning of that strange word, 'kosher.' If a Jew begs for a little bit of kosher in his final moments, it must surely be a very important and exalted thing! "

When I returned to America after the war, I found out from the local rabbi about the obligation Jews have to keep kosher, for which that Jew in the Holocaust sacrificed his life. Since then, I could not bring myself to put anything into my mouth that wasn't kosher. That's why we carefully observe the laws of kashrus."

That was the man's incredible story.

Upon hearing the moving story, the principal asked his host, "If that's the case, you'll surely want your children to be careful about the laws of kashrus, as I understand that you're interested like any father your sons continuing in your path. However, they, who did not see the terrible sight in the concentration camp of someone sacrificing his life for kashrus, and they only received it as a tradition from their father's house - they surely won't continue upholding that tradition for the rest of their lives.

The only way to have kashrus continue in the coming generations is to transfer your children to Torah schools, where they will receive an authentic, pure Jewish education, which, among other things, will teach them to observe the laws of kashrus properly."

Amazingly, the man accepted the principal's argument and transferred his children to the yeshivah in town. He eventually merited seeing all his children grow to be talmidei chachamim and true yirei Shamayim, thanks to his observing the laws of kashrus!

That unknown Polish Jew, in his final moments before leaving this world, indirectly caused an entire family to become ba'alei teshuvah, in the zechus of sacrificing his life for kashrus! (Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz shlita)



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל וכו' (יט-יד)

The gemara (Berachos 63b) quotes the famous words of Resh Lakish: "*How do we know that the words of Torah are perpetuated only through one who is willing to give his life for it? As it states, 'This is the Torah - a man who dies inside his tent.'*"

This exhortation includes not only the actual study of Torah and the requirement to expend every effort for *Limud Hatorah*, but also doing one's utmost to support and perpetuate Torah learning through others.

The Ponovezher Rov, R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman ZT"L, was once staying in a central Chicago neighborhood while he attempted to raise funds for his yeshiva. His routine was to deliver a *gemara shiur* to a group of householders, only afterwards asking for their contributions in the support of Torah and the Ponovezher Yeshiva. It became widely known throughout the city that he was there delivering a lecture and it was usually well attended.

During that same period of time, a fundraiser for the Novardok Yeshiva in Bnei Brak came to Chicago, and happened upon the *shul* where the Ponovezher Rov was delivering his *shiur*. Understanding the scenario, the fundraiser realized he had nothing to seek in this place. If the Ponovezher Rov was already here, he was pretty much wasting his time.

"But as long as I'm here," he thought, "it would be a pity to miss out on a *shiur* by the *Gaon* of Ponovezh." He pulled up a chair and listened.

A wonderful *shiur* it was, and when it was over, the Ponovezher Rov raised his voice and asked for everyone's attention: "Here in the *shul* with us is a respected Jew, a *talmid chacham* from Bnei Brak. He came in quietly and is sitting on the side. You should know that this man has come all this way in order to help support Torah, as a representative of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bnei Brak."

The Rov went on to praise that yeshiva and exhort the group as to their obligation to help support it. By the time he was done, he had moved his audience to give generously to the man sitting on the side. The Novardok Yeshiva truly benefited handsomely that day.

As they were leaving the *shul*, the fundraiser ran over to the Ponovezher Rov and burst out emotionally, "Rebbe, I don't know what to say! You worked so hard, traveling and devoting your precious time and many, many hours on behalf of your own yeshiva, Yeshivas Ponovezh. You 349ravelled all this way and in the end with the money practically in your purse, you directed it all to the Novardok Yeshiva. To my yeshiva, not yours! I doubt these people will be moved to give a second time. What have you done? And why did you do it?"

The Rov gazed at him through eyes that were filled with love and caring for all Jews, and answered, "My dear man, is there a 'yours' or a 'mine' when it comes to Hashem's Torah? In supporting the Torah, is there a 'yours' or a 'mine'? Our only goal is to increase Torah learning among our people. Let the talmidim increase in every yeshiva – in every location and in every corner!"

"Purity comes from returning to one's source. The Parah Adumah purifies because it reconnects man to the root of life itself, and anything rooted in the Divine cannot remain defiled." ~ Maharal of Prague.

Parshah Pearls

The Joy of Being Bitten by a Snake

**וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נְחַשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וַיְשִׂמֵהוּ עַל־הַנֵּס וְהָיָה אִם־נָשַׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת־אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט אֶל־נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וָחָי - " … *and it shall be that when a snake will bite a man, he will look at the copper snake and live*" (21:9).



Chazal have taught that whenever the Torah uses the word וְהָיָה , it is always a sign of joy. It is not at first clear, what is joyous about being bitten by a poisonous snake?

However, if we read the Pasuk carefully, we will see that the question is answered automatically, says the Meshech Chochmah. The Torah has just promised that anybody who is bitten by a snake and who looks up at the copper snake will be cured. So what did the people do?

Somebody who was very ill would get himself bitten by one of the snakes and then look up at the copper Snake. After all, had G-d not promised to cure him. And so it was. No wonder then, that many people were only too happy to become bitten by a copper snake.

Short Story By Yoni Schwartz

There was a remarkable incident involving a non-religious man in Israel and **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Z"TL**. At the time, the man was drowning in debt. His financial situation had become so severe that he was about to lose his home, car, and other possessions.

Someone suggested that he visit Rav Chaim Kanievsky, and with no other options, he agreed. The Rav asked, "What is the problem you're struggling with?"

The man explained that he was buried in debt and facing a terrible situation.

Rav Chaim replied, "I also have debts." (He was referring to the spiritual debts he owed to Hashem in his Torah learning, though the man did not realize this.)

The man asked, "How do you deal with them?"

Rav Chaim answered, "I take a Gemara off the shelf and learn."

"And that works?" the man asked.

"Every time," the Rav responded.

"But I don't know how to learn Gemara," the man said.

"Then learn Mishnayos," Rav Chaim replied.

When the man returned home, his wife asked what the Rav had said. "To resolve my debts, the great Rav told me to learn Torah," he answered. Surprisingly, his non-religious wife agreed. Together, they began becoming more observant, and with his wife's encouragement, the man devoted himself to Torah study.

Over time, and seemingly without explanation, their debts began disappearing one by one until none remained.



Rabbi Moshe Feinstein on the Parah Adumah

"The Parah Adumah teaches that a Jew does not serve Hashem only when he understands. The greatest wisdom is recognizing that the Creator's knowledge is infinite while ours is limited.

Even Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of men, declared that the secret of the Parah Adumah remained beyond his grasp.

True avodas Hashem begins not merely with understanding, but with the humility to obey even when understanding has not yet arrived."



Chizuk for the day!

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh in the beginning of Parshas Chukas reveals profound mystical and ethical insights, focusing heavily on the enigmatic Parah Adumah (Red Heifer).

The Death of the Righteous Brings Atonement

The Torah places the laws of the Parah Adumah immediately after the death of Miriam. The Ohr HaChaim explains this juxtaposition to teach a critical lesson: just as the ashes of the Parah Adumah purify the spiritually impure, the passing of the righteous—and the grief associated with it—brings about ultimate atonement and forgiveness for the entire generation.

The "Statute of the Torah": The Ohr HaChaim asks why the ritual of the Parah Adumah is specifically called the "Statute of the Torah" (Chukas HaTorah) rather than simply the "Statute of Purity." He notes that Taharah is only relevant to the Jewish people. Following a commandment that defies human logic (a Chok) demonstrates unconditional submission to Hashem. If a person willingly fulfills this seemingly unreasonable law, Hashem considers it as if they have fulfilled the entire Torah. - It proves your loyalty isn't just based on convenience or intellectual understanding.

The Rokeiach answers that this teaches us that Torah study purifies like the parah adumah.

The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "Even when there isn't a parah adumah, by studying Torah with hasmadah, one becomes pure."

Studying Gemara, in particular, purifies. **Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zy"a** said that Gemara comes from the word **גְּיוּמְרִי** [coals] because Gemara is like burning coals that burn away all impurities.

Rebbe Shmuel Kaminka zy"a once spoke with his students about the importance of studying a "blatt Gemara." He said, "With a blatt Gemara, one comes out of the blotta (the mud, the yetzer hara)."

One of the students became inspired and quickly went into the next room to find a Gemara. He couldn't find a Gemara, but he found a mishnayos. So he studied a chapter of mishnayos and then returned to hear more Torah from Reb Shmuel Kaminka.

As he returned, Rebbe Shmuel commented, "He thinks he can cleanse himself with a chapter Mishnayos with the same purity that comes from a daf Gemara.."

The word **טמא**, spelled out in full like this: **טי״ת מם אלף** is gematriya 610. **תורה** is one more because **תורה** is gematriya 611. This is hinted in the yotzros of Shabbos Parah, **מי יתן טהור הלא אחד**, that purity comes from the one more, which is Torah

Acquiring Torah - Rabbi Shimon Kaplin

חז״ל tell us in this weeks **פרשה** on the **זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל**, This is the **תורה** regarding a man if he will die in a tent, that " **אין התורה נקנית אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה**", meaning that **תורה** is only acquired by a person who kills himself for **תורה**.

It seems that this is a **תנאי** for **קנין התורה**, how on our **מדריגה** can we be **ממית עצמו** for **תורה**? What does it mean to be **ממית עצמו עליה** today?

What is our level in **ממית עצמו עליה**? When **ישיבת מיר** was escaping the Nazis **ימ״ש**, at one point thy were traveling on a ship to Shanghai and **Rav Shmuel Berenbaum זצ״ל** was in the midst of learning with his **חברותא** when suddenly the captain announced over the loudspeaker, "There is a once in an eighty-year chance to see a total solar eclipse, if you want to see the eclipse come up to the deck right now."

Suddenly people were running from all over the ship to get onto the deck. **ר׳ שמואל** was so engrossed in his learning that he didn't even hear the announcement.

Only once he saw so many people running past him did he realize something was going on.

He asked his **חברותא**, "Where is everyone running to?" he thought perhaps there was some danger.

His **חברותא** answered him, "There is a once in an eighty-year opportunity to see a total solar eclipse."

ר׳ שמואל answered him, "Okay so let's carry on learning. I have now a once in a eighty-year opportunity to show **הקב״ה** how much I love His **תורה**, do you think I am going to give up that opportunity?"



Stop Trying to win the Argument – Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

This week's *Parsha* recounts the sin of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, an event that's ultimately beyond our ability to fully comprehend. *Moshe* was the greatest *navi*, the greatest prophet who ever lived, and *Chazal* teach us that his level was far beyond our own. Nevertheless, the *Torah* records this episode because there's a lesson for us to learn from it. *Hashem* instructed *Moshe Rabbeinu* to speak to the rock and bring forth water for *Klal Yisroel*.



Instead, *Moshe* strikes the rock. As a result, *Moshe* was denied entry into *Eretz Yisroel*. At first glance, this is difficult to understand. Water doesn't normally come out of a rock.

Whether *Moshe* spoke to the rock or struck it, a miracle was required anyway. Why was hitting the rock such a serious offense? And why did it warrant such a severe consequence?

The question becomes even stronger when we remember an earlier episode in *Parshas Beshalach*, when *Klal Yisroel* complained about a lack of water shortly after leaving *Mitzrayim*, *Hashem* explicitly instructs *Moshe* to strike the rock. There, hitting the rock was exactly what he was supposed to do. Why was it appropriate then, but not now? I heard a beautiful explanation from **רב משה ויינברגר שליט"א**.

He says the difference was not in the rock, it was in the generation. The generation that left *Mitzrayim* had grown up as slaves. They were raised in an environment of harshness, force, and oppression. That was the language they understood.

Therefore, when *Moshe* struck the rock in *Parshas Beshalach*, he was communicating in a manner that resonated with that generation. But forty years later, in this week's *Parsha*, *Parshas Chukas*, a new generation stood before him. These were people who had been raised entirely in the desert. They had lived their whole lives surrounded by *Hashem's* care.

They ate *mon* from *Hashem*, drank water from *Miriam's* Well, and they were protected by the *Ananei HaKavod*. This generation requires a different language, a language of communication, understanding, and connection, rather than force. That's why *Moshe's* action was viewed so seriously. The issue was not merely whether the rock was struck or spoken to; the deeper issue was a leader has to know how to communicate with the generation standing in front of him.

Every generation has its language, its own struggles, and its own needs. And perhaps the lesson for us is that successful leadership, educating, parenting, and relationships, all depend on the same principle. Before we can influence people, we have to learn to speak their language.

Gut Shabbos.

When a person has no parnassah, I understand how he lives — through Emuna and Bitachon.

But I don't understand how a person who has all that he needs, lives! ~ R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischah zt"l.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

The number of pesukim in Parshas Chukas is 87. This is the numerical value of the Hebrew word 'פז,' which means purified gold, yet another hint to the fact that the red heifer helps to atone for the sin of the golden calf.

The fact that there is a specific word for "purified gold," meaning gold that has had its impurities burned out, is very telling. After going through the purification process, the gold is no longer just gold. It is something better, more refined – like Man should be.

The challenges and difficulties in our lives are meant to rid us of our impurities such as arrogance, selfishness and cruelty so we are transformed into our best selves.