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Rabbi Mordechai Willig From Yehoshua to Yehoshua

I The "entire House" (both men and women) of Yisrael wept when Aharon died (Bamidbar 20:29), while when Moshe died only the "sons (lit. - children)" of Yisrael wept (Devarim 34:8). Rashi explains that Aharon pursued peace and instilled love between disputants, including a man and his wife, and therefore was mourned by all. Moshe was mourned primarily by the men whom he taught Torah.

As the one who received the Torah from Hashem, Moshe's influence on all of Am Yisrael was unparalleled. And yet, his very closeness to Hashem limited his direct contact with the masses, and even his own wife (Rashi Bamidbar 12:8). Aharon, by contrast, had direct contact with the men and women as a peacemaker as well as teacher who turned many away from sin (Malachi 2: 6-7). As a result, the entire House of Israel wept when he died.

II "Yehoshua is worthy of being rewarded for his service, for he would not depart from within [Moshe's] tent [of study]" (Rashi Bamidbar 27:16, see Shemos 33:11). Moshe saw the humility of Yehoshua (Targum Yonasan Bamidbar 13:16), a loyal student who remained as close as possible to his teacher. As such, Moshe transmitted the Torah to Yehoshua, his primary disciple (Avos 1:1). Rashi adds that Yehoshua "killed himself" in the tents of Torah (see Bamidbar 9:14, Brachos 63b) and earned a good name in the world.

Ibn Eza (Shemos ibid) notes that although Yehoshua was 56 years old, he was called a "na'ar" to reflect the fact that he served ("u'm'sharso") Moshe selflessly and loyally, just as a young disciple would. Indeed, Yehoshua strove to merely reflect the radiance of Moshe as the moon reflects the light of the sun (Bava Basra 75a). It is precisely this humility and subservience that enabled Yehoshua to become Moshe's primary disciple and successor.

III The late Rav Yehoshua ben ben R' Aharon Neuwirth zt"l, who passed away this week, combined the above attributes of Moshe's primary disciple, Yehoshua, and his brother, Aharon. Like Yehoshua, he toiled in the tents of Torah and earned a good name for his many acts on behalf of the Torah community. His closeness, loyalty, and subservience to his rebbe, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, enabled his now classic Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa, a masterpiece of clarity and exposition that spawned a new genre of Torah literature. Like Aharon, he tried to reach the entire house of Israel. In fact, the subtitle of his magnum opus is "Practical Halacha for the Jewish Home", and its text is accessible to, and studied by, men and women alike, and was translated, with his encouragement and supervision, into English.

First published in 1964, Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa was reissued in 1979 with many more, and copious, footnotes. Here, the author fulfilled "V'Yehoshua l'zekainim", exhibiting more profound Torah scholarship of his own and, more significantly, of his illustrious rebbe. The final version, printed in 2010, incorporates the comments of Rav Auerbach zt"l, and an introduction to Hilchos Shabbos which he had published as Vol III. In 1988, Vol II, on the positive mitzvos of Shabbos was released.

Unlike Aharon, when Yehoshua died, he was not eulogized properly, and Am Yisrael was nearly punished as a result (Shabbos 105b). The loss of Rav Yehoshua ben R' Aharon Neuwirth, zt"l, an unassuming giant of Torah, chessed and community leadership, must be eulogized by the entire House of Israel. May his Torah live on forever, and may his memory be a blessing for his family and Klal Yisrael.

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date: Thu, Jun 13, 2013 at 5:05 PM subject: Rabbi Frand
on Parshas Chukas

Parshas Chukas These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #863, Shabbos in the Good 'Ol Summertime. Good Shabbos!

Two Readings of Reish Lakish's Teaching

We read in this week's parsha: "This is the law (Torah) when a man dies in his tent" [Bamidbar 19:14]. The Talmud contains a very famous teaching of Resh Lakish on this pasuk: "The words of Torah are only lasting with one who kills himself upon them" [Shabbos 83b]. In other words, to really grow in Torah scholarship requires a form of self-sacrifice.

I would like to share a story (I once heard from Rav Gifter, zt"l) which presents the classic interpretation of this teaching and then I would like to present a different insight into this same teaching of Resh Lakish from a Chassidic Master.

Rav Gifter once travelled to Mexico to collect money on behalf of the Telshe Yeshiva. Rav Gifter wanted to see a certain individual who was apparently a very wealthy man, so he could ask him for a donation for the Yeshiva. Try as he might, whenever he would come to the man's house, the man was never home. Whenever Rav Gifter appeared – morning, afternoon, evening, or week ends, he was told the fellow was not home but was "in the office".

Finally, Rav Gifter went to the man's factory. He camped out there early in the morning and was finally able to catch the man. Rav Gifter told him, "I do not understand you. Morning, evening, night you are never home! What's going to be? What is going to be with your family?"

The person responded to Rav Gifter: (in Yiddish) "Mir daft ligen in gesheft", loosely translated as "In order to be successful in business, one

must live in his business!" Rav Gifter used this sentence over and over again as a metaphor for his own students and for many other Torah students from other Yeshivas: "If one wants to be successful in Torah learning one has to LIVE in Torah 24/7." This is exactly the same teaching of Resh Lakish: "Torah will only be lasting for one who kills himself for it." If one wishes to become an accomplished scholar in Torah learning, it requires total devotion.

Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel once told a student "It is very simple to become a great person in Torah learning. There is a very simple formula. You just need to learn 12 hours a day." For a bachur in Yeshiva, it is not that hard to learn 12 hours a day. "But", he went on, "You have to do it every day of your life. That includes Erev Pessach. It includes being hazemanim (while on vacation). It includes Chol HaMoed." If a person learns every single day for 12 hours a day, he will indeed become a great person in learning.

This is the story I wanted to share from Rav Gifter.

Recently, I heard in the name of Reb Nochum of Chernoble, an entirely different perspective on the teaching that "Torah will not be established except for one who kills himself for it." In a classic Chassidic twist, Reb Nochum taught if one wants to build a Torah institution – be it a Yeshiva, be it a Beis Yaakov, or whatever kind of institution one wants to build – the institution will only come into permanent existence by a person who is willing to kill himself, i.e. – negate his own ego – when it comes to that institution. Torah is built when the person is not in it for his own glory and for his own power; when he is not in it for his own self but is willing to "kill himself". A person cannot be interested in getting who gets the credit. When one kills the "I" - that is how he is successful in building a Torah institution.

L'Havdil many times over, Ronald Regan once said "There is no limit to what can be accomplished in this town (meaning Washington, DC) if it is not important who gets the credit." This is what it means "killing himself" over it.

Stop And Take Note Of What's Happening Around You!

The pasuk teaches: (G-d tells Moshe) "Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and you shall speak to the rock before their eyes and it shall give its waters. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the assembly and their animals." [Bamidbar 20:8]

The Ramban derives from the wording of this pasuk that the Divine plan was for Moshe to speak to the rock, the water would start pouring out from the rock, then Moshe would deliver a sermon in front of the Congregation: "Hear you all: You were thirsty, you asked for water, the Master of the Universe has given you water, now drink."

The purpose of the speech, according to the Ramban, was to publicize the miracle. Now of course, everyone would be aware that a miracle occurred. Water does not come forth from rocks. But in their zeal to drink the water, it would fly right over their heads.

However, the Ramban says, this never happened. Moshe never had a chance to give the speech. The water came out and there was a stampede. There was no time for speeches. They were so thirsty that they fell upon the spring of water that emerged from the rock and started drinking as soon as they could.

Rav Simcha Zissel asks: "What is the point of this Ramban?" The point is that we sometimes need to stop and think about what is transpiring around us. Even if a miracle occurs, if we do not take the time to reflect upon it, it can be lost. When incidents occur, it is important in life to stop for a moment and contemplate about what has transpired. That can sometimes change a person's life. But if a person goes through life blindly, never stopping to think "What does this mean?" then he misses so many opportunities in life for spiritual growth.

The Women Mourned For Moshe As Well, But...

The Torah says that when Aaron died, he was mourned by "the ENTIRE house of Israel." [Bamidbar 20:29] Rashi makes the comment

that when Moshe died, the Torah only said that he was mourned by "the house of Israel" (not the ENTIRE house of Israel), indicating that the men cried but not the women.

The Maharal in the Gur Aryeh says "I cannot believe that. I cannot believe that when Moshe Rabbeinu died, the women cannot cry." After all, Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader of the Jewish people for 40 years. He was their leader in Egypt. He was the leader in the Wilderness. This was Moshe Rabbeinu! He provided for the needs of everyone – men, women, and children! They must have all been devastated by his demise!

When I went to Rav Moshe Feinstein's funeral, I saw women crying. These are women who never opened up an Igros Moshe in their life. How could it be that the women did not cry at Moshe's levaya?

The Maharal says a very interesting thing. Certainly, the women cried for Moshe when he died and it was the same crying that the men did. The reason for this is because the benefit the women received from Moshe was the same benefit the men received. He provided them with sustenance and leadership and food and all their basic needs. It was the exact same crying.

However, it was a different story with Aaron. Aaron was the "Lover of peace and pursuer of peace". When a husband and wife became angry at each other, Aaron went and spoke to the husband and then he went and spoke to the wife. The Maharal says that anyone who knows anything about men and women will realize that the way Aaron spoke to men was not the same way he spoke to women. Any person who does not understand this will have a hard time with their marriage.

Women and men have different languages. They understand things differently. A person cannot use the same type of speaking with men as they do with women and vice versa. When Aaron spoke to the men, he spoke one way and when he spoke to the women, he spoke a different way. Therefore, the crying of the men and the crying of the women were different types of crying. The separate genders each had a different relationship with Aaron and reacted to his death in different fashions. Therefore, it was not one uniform form of crying – as was the case with Moshe – but it was "the ENTIRE House of Israel" – each crying in their own fashion.

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**Losing Miriam
by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

It is a scene that still has the power to shock and disturb. The people complain. There is no water. It is an old complaint and a predictable one. That's what happens in a desert. Moses should have been able to handle

it in his stride. He has been through far tougher challenges in his time. Yet suddenly he explodes into vituperative anger:

"Listen now, you rebels, shall we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. (Num. 20: 10-11)

It was such egregious behaviour, so much of an over-reaction, that the commentators had difficulty in deciding which aspect was worst. Some said, it was hitting the rock instead of speaking to it as God had instructed. Some said, it was the use of the word "we." Moses knew that God would send water: it had nothing to do with Aaron or himself. Others, most famously Maimonides, said that it was the anger evident in the words "Listen now, you rebels."

The question I want to raise is simply: what made this trial different? Why did Moses momentarily lose control? Why then? Why there? This question is entirely separate from that of why Moses was not allowed to enter the land. Although the Torah associates the two, I argue elsewhere that this was not a punishment at all. Moses did not lead the people across the Jordan and into the land because that task, involving a new generation and an entirely new set of challenges, demanded a new leader. Even the greatest figures in history belong to a specific time and place. Dor dor u-parnasav. "Each generation has its own leaders" (Avodah Zarah 5a). Leadership is time-bound, not timeless.

Behind Moses' loss of emotional control is a different story, told with utmost brevity in the text: "In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried. Now there was no water for the community ..." Moses lost control because his sister Miriam had just died. He was in mourning for his eldest sibling. It is hard to lose a parent, but in some ways it is even harder to lose a brother or sister. They are your generation. You feel the angel of death come suddenly close. You face your own mortality.

But Miriam was more than a sister to Moses. She was the one, while still a six-year-old child, to follow the course of the wicker basket holding her baby brother as it drifted down the Nile. She had the courage and ingenuity to approach Pharaoh's daughter and suggest that she employ a Hebrew nurse for the child, thus ensuring that Moses would grow up knowing his family, his people and his identity.

Small wonder that the sages said that Miriam persuaded her father Amram, the gadol hador (leading scholar of his generation) to annul his decree that Hebrew husbands should divorce their wives and have no more children since there was a fifty per cent chance that any child born would be killed. "Your decree," said Miriam, "is worse than Pharaoh's. He only decreed against the males, yours applies to females also. He intends to rob children of life in this world: you would deny them even life in the world to come" (Midrash Lekach Tov to Ex. 2: 1). Amram admitted her superior logic. Husbands and wives were reunited. Yocheved became pregnant and Moses was born. Note simply that this midrash, told by the sages, unambiguously implies that a six year old girl had more faith and wisdom than the leading rabbi of the generation!

Moses surely knew what he owed his elder sister. She had accompanied him throughout his mission. She led the women in song at the Red Sea. The one episode that seems to cast her in a negative light - when she "spoke against Moses because of his Cushite wife," for which she was punished with leprosy - was interpreted more positively by the sages. They said she was critical of Moses for breaking off marital relations with his wife Zipporah. He had done so because he needed to be in a state of readiness for Divine communication at any time. Miriam felt Zipporah's plight and sense of abandonment. Besides which, she and Aaron had also received Divine communication but they had not been commanded to be celibate. She may have been wrong, suggested the sages, but not maliciously so. She spoke not out of jealousy of her brother but out of sympathy for her sister-in-law.

Likewise the sages understood the two events that preceded Moses' crisis - Miriam's death and the absence of water for the community - as connected. It was in Miriam's merit, they said, that the Israelites had water during the desert years. A well (Miriam's well) accompanied them on their travels, and when Miriam died, the water ceased.

So it was not simply the Israelites' demand for water that led Moses to lose control of his emotions, but rather his own deep grief. The Israelites may have lost their water, but Moses had lost his sister, who had watched over him as a child, guided his development, supported him throughout the years, and helped him carry the burden of leadership by her role as leader of the women.

It is a moment that reminds us of words from the Book of Judges said by Israel's chief of staff, Barak, to its judge-and-leader Deborah: "If you go with me, I will go; but if you do not go with me, I cannot go" (Judges 4). The relationship between Barak and Deborah was much less close than that between Moses and Miriam, yet Barak acknowledged his dependence on a wise and courageous woman. Can Moses have felt less?

Bereavement leaves us deeply vulnerable. In the midst of loss we can find it hard to control our emotions. We make mistakes. We act rashly. We suffer from a momentary lack of judgment. These are common symptoms even for ordinary humans like us. In Moses' case however, there was an additional factor. He was a prophet, and grief can occlude or eclipse the prophetic spirit. Maimonides answers the well known question as to why Jacob, a prophet, did not know that his son Joseph was still alive, with the simplest possible answer: grief banishes prophecy. For twenty-two years, mourning his missing son, Jacob could not receive the Divine word. Moses, the greatest of all the prophets, remained in touch with God. It was God, after all, who told him to "speak to the rock." But somehow the message did not penetrate his consciousness fully. That was the effect of grief.

So the details are, in truth, secondary to the human drama played out that day. Yes, Moses struck the rock, said "we" instead of "God," and lost his temper with the people. The real story, though, is about Moses the man in an onslaught of grief, vulnerable, exposed, caught in a vortex of emotions, suddenly bereft of the sisterly presence that had been the most important bass-note of his life, Miriam, the precociously wise and plucky child who had taken control of the situation when the life of her three-month old brother lay in the balance, undaunted by either an Egyptian princess or a rabbi-father, Miriam who led the women in song, sympathised with her sister-in-law when she saw the price she paid for being the wife of a leader, Miriam in whose merit the people had water in a parched land, the quiet heroine without whom Moses was temporarily lost and alone.

The story of Moses and the rock is ultimately less about Moses and a rock than about a great Jewish woman, Miriam, appreciated fully only when she was no longer there.

This article can also be read at:

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from: Ozer Alport <oalport@optonline.net> date: Thu, Jun 13, 2013 at 4:12 PM subject: Parsha Potpourri - Parshas Chukas **Parsha Potpourri** Parshas Chukas - Vol. 8, Issue 36
Compiled by Rabbi Ozer Alport
20:8 Vidibartem El HaSelah LiEineihem..

Although Parshas Chukas begins by describing events which took place during the second year of the Jewish people's sojourn in the wilderness, Rashi writes (20:1) that the parsha then skips 38 years to discuss episodes that occurred during the last of their forty years of wandering in the desert. By that point, all of those who were destined to die in the wilderness had already passed away, leaving an entire nation of righteous Jews who merited entering the land of Israel. The parsha finishes with this new generation conquering the lands of Sichon and Og, which became part of Eretz Yisroel. My esteemed brother-in-law Rabbi Yonah Sklare suggests that Parshas Chukas serves as one of the bookends to the period in Jewish history which began in Parshas Beshalach with the Exodus from Egypt and concluded with the new generation beginning the transition to the land of Israel. For this reason, Parshas Chukas contains the deaths not only of the generation that left Egypt, but also the physical deaths or the death decrees of the leaders of that generation: Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. Because Parshas Beshalach serves as the other bookend to this era in national history, the events described in the two Torah portions show remarkable parallel structure. Parshas Chukas begins with the mitzvah of parah adumah - the purification process involving the red heifer - a mitzvah which Rashi writes (Shemos 15:25) was first given to the Jewish people at Marah, in Parshas Beshalach. Later in Parshas Chukas, the Jewish people are attacked by Amalek (Rashi 21:1), just as they were at the end of Parshas Beshalach. After the battle against Amalek, the Jews began to complain about a lack of adequate food, just as they did in Parshas Beshalach (Shemos 16:3). Hashem responded by sending fiery serpents to punish them. After the people acknowledged that they had sinned, Moshe made a copper serpent and placed it on a pole, so that anybody who was bitten by one of the serpents could look at it and be healed. The Mishnah in Rosh Hashana (3:8) equates this incident with Moshe raising his hands during the battle against Amalek in Parshas Beshalach, explaining that both episodes serve as examples of subjugating our hearts to Hashem in order to accomplish our objectives. Parshas Chukas proceeds to record the miracle in the Arnon Valley, in which the cliffs in the gorge moved together, thereby crushing the Amorites who were waiting in caves to ambush the Jews as they passed below (Rashi 21:15). The Torah specifically compares this miracle to the splitting of the Sea of Reeds in Parshas Beshalach, and the Jewish people commemorated their miraculous salvation by singing a song of praise to Hashem which began ?? ???? (then they sang), the same words which are used to introduce the song that they sang at the Yam Suf in Parshas Beshalach. Finally, after the death of Miriam, the Jewish people complained to Moshe about a lack of water, just as they did in Parshas Beshalach. In both cases, Hashem commanded Moshe to respond to their protests by extracting water from a rock. However, there is one subtle difference between the two episodes. In Parshas Beshalach, Hashem told Moshe to strike the rock with his staff, whereas in Parshas Chukas, Hashem told him to speak to the rock in order to produce the water. This distinction was so subtle that Moshe erred and hit the rock as he had done in Parshas Beshalach. What is the difference between speaking to the rock and striking it? Rabbi Sklare notes that Rashi explains (20:12) that a rock which follows Hashem's spoken instructions teaches the people the importance of obeying Hashem's commandments. A rock which is hit, on the other hand, represents the concept of disobedience which must be overpowered by Hashem's might. After forty years of maturing in the wilderness, Hashem expected the Jewish people to be on the level of realizing that there is no opposition to Him, as symbolized by the command to speak to the rock. The original metamorphosis from speaking to hitting occurred during the ten plagues, when the ten utterances through which Hashem created the world were transformed into ten blows. At the time of Creation, the obedient Earth manifested Hashem's spoken Word, but the heretical Egyptians transformed their country into a place of defiance, leaving Hashem no choice but to force

them into submission through the ten plagues. In Parshas Beshalach, the Jewish people had just departed from Egypt after Hashem finished striking it, and it was therefore appropriate for Moshe to hit the rock. Parshas Chukas concludes the period of wandering in the wilderness as the Jewish people prepared to enter Eretz Yisroel, which is described by the Torah (Devorim 11:10-12) as the antithesis of Egypt, a country upon which Hashem's eyes are constantly focused. At that time, the appropriate approach was therefore one of speaking to the rock. In this light, Moshe's mistake in striking the rock instead of speaking to it was not merely an oversight which took place in a vacuum and was punished arbitrarily, but rather a symbolic demonstration that he was still connected to the Exodus from Egypt and not the entry into Eretz Yisroel, in which case the appropriate punishment was that he forfeited his right to lead the nation into the land of Israel.

21:27 Al Kein Yomru Hamoshlim.. 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) homiletically 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 know 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. Parsha Points to Ponder (and sources which discuss them):

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from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org> via njop.ccsend.com reply-to: ezbuchwald@njop.org date: Mon, Jun 10, 2013 at 6:03 PM subject: Weekly Torah Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald
Chukat 5773-2013

**“Striking the Stone: the Parameters of Anger”
by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald**

Among the many topics in this week’s parasha, is the report of Miriam’s death and the subsequent lack of water. We have written about the connection between Miriam and the lack of water previously (Chukat 5771-2011).

For thirty-nine long years, the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness. Almost four decades passed since G-d decreed that all the adult males, twenty years old or older, would not be allowed to enter the land of Israel due to the sin of the spies who returned with evil reports about the land of Israel. In the first month of the very last year in the wilderness, the people of Israel arrived at Zin, and settled in Kadesh, where Miriam died and is buried.

Suddenly there was no water for the assembly, and the people begin to quarrel with Moses. Moses and Aaron approach the entrance of the Tabernacle, fall on their faces, when G-d’s glory appears to them.

G-d then instructs Moses to take his staff, gather all the people together with Aaron, and go speak to the rock before the people’s eyes, so that the rock shall yield its water. Moses will then give the people, and their animals water to drink.

As G-d instructed, Moses takes his staff before G-d. Along with Aaron, he gathers the congregation together before the rock, and says to the people (Numbers 20:10), “Shim’oo nah ha’moh’reem, ha’mim ha’sseh’lah ha’zeh no’tzee lah’chem mah’yeem?” Listen now, you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock? Moses then raises his arm and strikes the rock with his staff twice. Water comes flowing forth, and Moses gives both the people and their animals water to drink.

G-d is displeased with Moses’ disobedience and says to him and Aaron, Numbers 20:12, “Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore, you will not bring this congregation to the land that I have given them.”

There is great diversity of opinion over the actual sin of Moses and Aaron (Chukat 5765-2005). In fact, Nachmanides declares, “The matter is a great secret of the mysteries of the Torah.”

However, one of the most prominent explanations offered is that Moses sinned by becoming angry, and calling the people rebels.

Maimonides in his introduction to Tractate Avot, Shemonah Perakim, states that not only did Moses sin by becoming angry at the people, his sin was actually compounded because the people assumed that whatever Moses said to them was a reflection of G-d’s will. Yet, nowhere in the scriptural text do we find that G-d was angered by the people’s complaint.

As we have seen in a number of instances in scripture, the seemingly inconsequential sins of great people are regarded by the Al-mighty as great transgressions. This is true not only in the present case with Moses and Aaron here at the waters of Meriba (contention), but also at the tragic death of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu for bringing a strange fire.

Objectively, one can easily conclude that Moses and Aaron were entirely correct in expressing great anger at the people. Because of their previous lack of faith and faithfulness, the people had been punished to travel in the wilderness for thirty nine years. Now, as they are about to enter the Promised Land, they quarrel with Moses saying, Numbers 20:3-4, “If only we had perished as our brethren perished before G-d.

Why have you brought the congregation of G-d to this wilderness to die here, we and our animals?”

According to the Midrash, each year on Tisha B’Av, the congregation of Israel witnessed one fortieth of the male adults die. Yet, the people seem not to have learned any lesson, and hardly any of Moses’ teachings seem to have registered. Moses’ and Aaron’s rage seem well justified.

But G-d judges great people differently. Or does He?

The Mishna in Avot 5:14 (Ethics of our Fathers), states that there are four types of temperaments in people. 1. One who is angered easily and pacified easily. His gain is offset by his loss. 2. One who is hard to anger and hard to pacify. His loss is offset by his gain. 3. One who is hard to anger and easy to pacify, is considered pious. 4. One who is easily angered and hard to pacify, is considered wicked.

Maimonides, in his Code of Laws of Ethical Conduct 1:1, writes that all human emotions and traits have their place, whether, anger, forgiveness, conceit, modesty, miserliness or generosity.

In general, Maimonides recommends the “middle way” or the “Golden Mean” as optimal. One should not be overly generous, nor overly stingy, not overly conceited, nor overly modest. When it comes to anger, however, Maimonides adds additional restrictions. Maimonides advises that a person should not be petulant and easy to anger, nor like a dead person who never feels, but rather intermediate; he should not get angry except for great matters worthy of being angry at, so that the subject of the anger should not repeat what he did.

In Laws of Ethical Conduct 2:3, Maimonides writes that there are some behaviors in which a person is entirely forbidden to engage, even in moderation. Anger is an extremely bad trait and it is fitting that a person distance himself from it to the extreme, and teach himself not to be angry, even in instances that anger appears appropriate.

Maimonides even suggests that if a parent or spouse wants to get angry at his children or household, or if a public leader wishes to express anger at his community, he may show anger publically, but inwardly he should maintain composure, feigning anger, but not be really angry. Maimonides even quotes the early sages, saying that those who become angry are like idol worshippers. One who is wise and becomes angry, his wisdom departs from him. If he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him. Those who are habitually angry, their life is not a life.

The Talmud in Pesachim 113b, states that there are three people that the Holy One loves: One who does not get angry, one who does not get drunk, and one who does not stand on ceremony. The Talmud in Eruvin 65b, quotes Rabbi Ila’i, who maintains that a person is known by three things: His cup (how he holds his wine), his pocket (his generosity), and by his anger.

Rabbi Berel Wein commenting on the Mishna in Pirkei Avot that was cited previously, says:

A person who is difficult to provoke, who can hold the demon of temper in check, and even if momentarily angered recovers good spirits and tolerance very quickly, is a truly blessed individual. The combination of wise attitude toward life and training in self control from early youth, can achieve much toward helping one become such a blessed person. There is an element of holiness in a person who controls his anger, and such a person is therefore called Chassid, someone of spiritual piety. People who are slow to anger and quick to forgive imitate the traits of our Creator, and thus are truly pious.

Dr. Erica Brown, a well-known writer and educator in the Greater Washington area, wrote poignantly in a recent weekly column about an effective and well-regarded teacher that she had, who was always rather pleasant. On one occasion, however, he lost it, and became very angry with his students. She cannot remember what the circumstance was that provoked him to lose his temper, but since that incident, her perception of the teacher has never been the same, and obviously she remembers it until this very day.

Notwithstanding the various strategies that may be employed to control our tempers, what is most important is that we recognize the long-range impact of our words. Just as one single outburst prevented Moses and Aaron from entering the Promised Land, in effect, terminating these great men's lifelong dream, so too, one inappropriate word of ours said in anger, can destroy a relationship, destroy a person's life, destroy a family, and destroy a future.

Perhaps that is why Ben Zoma declares in Avot 4:1, "Ay'zeh' hoo gee'bohr?" Who is strong? Who is heroic? He who subdues his anger. Ben Zoma's statement is followed by a supporting verse from Proverbs 16:32, "He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man, and a master of his passions is better than a conqueror of a city." The choice of the word "Gee'bohr," strong, heroic, in this context is no accident.

May the Al-mighty give us the strength, insight and fortitude to be heroic in our lives, our demeanors and in our relationships.

May you be blessed.

Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> Jun 10 (3 days ago) to yhe-sichot YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA <http://vbm-torah.org/archive/sichot73/34-73chukat.htm>

PARASHAT CHUKAT SICHA OF HARAV MOSHEH LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

Moshe's Leadership and the Transition of Generations Translated by David Silverberg

I. "Moshe Grew Angry" Moshe's angry response to the incident of Mei Meriva differs drastically from all of his prior responses to Benei Yisrael's repeated complaints and grumbling. Previously, Moshe and Aharon had prayed on their behalf and often appealed to them to turn to God rather than quarrel. Even during the severe crisis at Kivrot ha-Ta'ava, when Moshe simply could not relate to Benei Yisrael or show understanding for their complaint, he exhibited no anger towards them. He rather turned to God and asked that he be relieved of the leadership.

Suddenly, at Mei Meriva, a rift develops between him and the nation. The first expression of this change is the paralysis that grips Moshe upon hearing the nation's protest (Bemidbar 20:6). Rather than responding with his usual petition to God or appeal to the people, Moshe instead withdraws to the Tent of Meeting and falls on his face. Moreover, the anger reflected in Moshe's admonition – "Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?" (20:10) – is not a single, isolated event, but rather marks the beginning of a process that characterizes the second half of Sefer Bemidbar. Throughout the final chapters we encounter time and time again friction and lack of communication between the leader of Israel and the flock under his charge. We can point to at least four incidents that reflect a distance, if not alienation, that has infiltrated Moshe's relationship with the people: a) Mei Meriva; b) Ba'al Pe'or; c) the battle against Midyan; d) the story of the tribes of Gad and Reuven.

Such a radical change requires us to examine the transformation that occurred and search for its roots. Why does Moshe change his mode of leadership? Why does he now begin preaching and scolding, as opposed to his earlier approach?

II. One Generation Goes, Another Comes We must first note that Mei Meriva marks the transition of generations. We no longer find ourselves in the first generation, the generation of the Exodus, but rather in the next generation, raised in the desert. The parents have died and been buried, and their children have taken their places. Sefer Bemidbar can be divided into two sections: the first half, which deals with the first generation that never earned entry into the Land (chapters 1-18), and the second half, which tells of the second generation, whose members are now prepared to settle the Land (chapters 20-36). In between the two halves stands the section of the para aduma (red heifer). At first glance,

the section of the para aduma bears no topical relevance to the plot of Sefer Bemidbar. Its halakhic content renders it far more suitable for Sefer Vayikra. Furthermore, Chazal claim that this section was actually transmitted on the day when the Mishkan was consecrated; it thus even chronologically precedes the sections of the Torah in which it is embedded. I heard from my grandfather and teacher, Rav Yosef Dov ha-Levi Soloveitchik zt"l, that the location of Parashat Para comes to express the despair and tragedy of Benei Yisrael's life in the wilderness. As a result of the decree of death issued against that generation, their lives became an ongoing confrontation with death. Parashat Para, which involves primarily the halakhic means of dealing with death, became a central feature of their lives. Its location, at this point in the Sefer, reveals for us – if only somewhat – the tragedy of this generation, living in the shadow of impending death. It emerges, then, that Parashat Para provides us with a synopsis of those thirty-eight years. It marks the point of transition between the second year, when the decree of death was issued, and fortieth year, when the generation of the exodus had died out and the people were ready to enter the land. Moshe understood that the first generation was incapable of overcoming its past and rising to a high level of trust in God, believing that he would provide for them in the wilderness. He therefore pinned his hopes on the generation of the children. Given their upbringing under the clouds of glory and in the shade of Mount Sinai, and considering that they never had to experience to suffering of the Egyptian crucible, Moshe saw the generation of the children as the ones who would correct the mistakes of their fathers. They represented the nation's future. With great energy and enthusiasm, Moshe and Yehoshua invest all their strength in educating the second generation. Moshe feels capable of shaping the spiritual world of the generation that lives under his protection from their earliest age. They drew all their education from him in total purity, without any external influences or pressures. In such a situation, Moshe expects that the mistakes of their parents would not repeat themselves in the new generation, for he attributed the parents' complaints and lack of trust to the circumstances in which they lived, rather than to human nature. The series of complaints by the second generation, beginning with Mei Meriva, reduced to naught all of Moshe's assumptions and hopes with regard to this generation. Hence his anger, the anger of frustration, of the shattering of hopes and bitter disappointment with Benei Yisrael, with that generation in particular and the human being in general, finds expression in his chiding of the nation. Their fear over the lack of water and their complaints about the manna parallel those of the first generation, as if they have learned nothing. It is this very fact that brings Moshe to the breaking point.

III. A Minor Sin, A Severe Punishment In light of what we have seen, we can assess Moshe's barred entry into the land and the transition of leadership from him to Yehoshua. At first glance, the explanation seems explicit in the text: Moshe sinned at Mei Meriva, and he is punished with a decree forbidding his entry into the land. The Almighty judges the righteous exactly, and as a result of this sin, Moshe and Aharon are denied entry into the land. The matter is not, however, quite so simple. This very point, that even the slightest transgression can result in such harsh judgment, is precisely what troubles the reader. Moreover, why focus on this particular wrongdoing? Indeed, Rashi (20:12) notes that, at first glance, Moshe's remarks to God at Kivrot ha-Ta'ava (11:22) appear far worse than his wrongdoing here at Mei Meriva. Why does this sin in particular bar Moshe's entry into the land?

We must also understand the punishment of Aharon, who did not play a significant role in hitting the rock, yet shared Moshe's punishment. In light of these questions, which strengthen one another, we may suggest viewing Moshe's denied entry into the land against the background of the processes we have discussed. The break that occurred between him and Benei Yisrael, which found expression in the anger and sense of helplessness that pervades the second half of Sefer Bemidbar,

forms the basis of the denial of his right to enter the land. His leadership ability has weakened, and he can no longer lead Benei Yisrael proudly into their land. In order to clarify this idea and reconcile it with the text, we must first resort to the verses towards the beginning of Sefer Devarim. There Moshe links the decree prohibiting his entry into the land with the sin of the scouts. In truth, however, upon examining the verse more closely, we see that it does not attribute Moshe's punishment to the sin of the spies itself. Rather, the results of the sin caused God's decree to affect Moshe, as well: "Because of you the Lord was incensed with me, too, and He said: You shall not enter it, either" (Devarim 1:37). How did the incident of spies impact upon Moshe? Why would the decree include him if he himself did not sin with the rest of the nation?

The answer is provided in an adjacent verse describing the punishment issued for the sin of the scouts: "The Lord heard the sound of your words and was angry. He vowed: Not one of these men, THIS EVIL GENERATION, shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers" (Devarim 1:34-35). The verse implies that the decree was not issued against each individual, prohibiting him from entering the land as a result of his personal sin in the incident of the spies. Rather, God decreed that the generation will not enter. It was therefore decreed that Moshe and Aharon, too, will be denied the right to enter the land, for the generation that they lead and to which they belong may not enter. Moshe and Aharon did not sin in the incident of the spies, and God expresses no anger regarding their actions during this episode. Nevertheless, the punishment resulting from the spies leads to the denial of their right of entry, given their membership in this generation. Moshe thus claims that the Almighty was incensed with him, too, as a result of the sin of the spies.

IV. Each Generation and Its Leaders As discussed above, the incident of Mei Meriva demonstrated that Moshe could no longer serve as Benei Yisrael's leader due to the generation gap between them. Not the sin, but rather the rift seals the fate of Moshe and Aharon and denies them the privilege of leading the armies of Israel into the land. They belonged to the previous generation, the generation that was fated to die in the desert. A careful reading reveals that this point emerges from the verses themselves. Each of the three verses that attribute Moshe's denied entry into the land to the incident of Mei Meriva (Bemidbar 20:12, 27:14, Devarim 32:51) emphasizes Moshe and Aharon's lack of success in sanctifying God's Name at Mei Meriva. In light of this, we can explain how Aharon's barred entry into the land relates to the episode of Mei Meriva. If the sin of Mei Meriva had been the decisive factor, then since he played a minor role in this affair, he would not have been punished so severely. However, once the chain of events at Mei Meriva determines that they are no longer successful as leaders, they cannot enter the land as leaders of the younger generation. Regarding this point, no distinction exists between Moshe and Aharon. The anger expressed at Mei Meriva is not a one-time expression of frustration, but rather a consistent phenomenon that accompanies Moshe's relationship with the second generation. The anger and bitterness that bursts forth with the declaration, "Listen, you rebels!" do not result from a momentary, tragic loss of control, but are rather a symptom of the rift and lack of communication between Moshe and the people. It becomes clear that Moshe cannot lead the nation for much longer, and if he does lead he will be unable to sanctify God's Name as he did in the past, given the abyss that has grown between him and the generation that will enter the land. Consequently, Moshe cannot proceed into the land as leader, and must therefore die in the wilderness as did the other members of the generation to whom God's decree of death applied. In truth, Chazal already noted that Moshe's prohibited entry into the land involved his role as national leader, not his personal status. Moreover, according to the Midrash (Devarim Rabba 9:9), Moshe indeed could have entered the land as a private citizen had he so desired; no decree was ever issued against him in this regard: [Moshe] said before Him: Master of the

world, let Yehoshua assume my title, and I will live. The Almighty said: Do for him what he does for you. Moshe immediately arose and went to Yehoshua's home. Yehoshua was frightened and said, "Moshe, my rabbi, come next to me." They left to go, and Moshe walked on Yehoshua's left. They entered the Tent of Meeting, and the pillar of cloud descended and stood in between them. When the pillar of cloud left, Moshe went to Yehoshua and said: What did God say to you? Yehoshua said to him: When He would speak with you, did I know what He said to you? At that moment Moshe cried and said: One hundred deaths are preferable to a single feeling of envy!... Once he accepted death, the Almighty began comforting him. He said to him: I swear, in this world you led My children, so in the future, too, I will lead them through you. The midrash indicates that God did not issue a decree against Moshe son of Amram as a private person; rather, he was denied permission to enter the land as the nation's leader. He was permitted to enter as a private citizen, but he would then have to submit his title and leadership to someone of the next generation to lead them in the land. However, after forty years during which his entire being was devoted to caring for the nation and their many needs, he can no longer live without full involvement in the national leadership. He therefore prefers leaving this world. The Almighty's words of consolation, promising him the leadership over Israel in the future, exemplifies the extent to which Moshe's identity is bound together with his role as Benei Yisrael's leader, and how far removed he has come from the days when the young lad fled to Midyan in order to be excused from the involvement in his nation's needs.

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via madmimi.com date: Tue, Jun 11, 2013 at 10:55 AM subject: Surveillance & Privacy; Infidelity - June 11, 2013

**Every moment is being recorded for posterity.
by Rabbi Benjamin Blech**

Millions of Americans have just been shocked to learn that there really is no such thing as privacy anymore.

The United States government admitted that it has been collecting information on our telephone conversations for the past seven years. They know who we called, how long we were on the phone with them - and we can only guess how much more they discovered about us from the records they requisitioned from the major telephone carriers.

Surveillance has become an undeniable part of our lives. With the help of modern technology there is almost nothing that can remain secret anymore. "There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment," George Orwell wrote in his classic prophetic work, 1984. What we say and what we do is all too often accessible to others, even when we don't voluntarily post it on Facebook or tweet about it on Twitter.

I am not prepared to take a stand on governmental eavesdropping. I recognize how the threat of terrorism has forced us to make hard but oft-times necessary compromises with the ideal of personal freedoms and right to privacy. Yet, I also realize the danger inherent in democratically elected leaders having access to the kind of information they can readily misuse to gain illegitimate power.

But I am profoundly intrigued by one aspect of the furor now sweeping the country in the aftermath of the government's admission that total privacy is no longer a fact of contemporary life. Countless people are not only appalled by the notion that others may know the secrets of their personal lives but afraid of what this knowledge may mean to the way in which they are perceived and how they will be forced to curtail their activities. And yet from a spiritual perspective the idea that everything we do is known by a higher power and recorded for posterity is a fundamental assumption that was supposed to guide us long before modern technology made its implementation possible.

When Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nassi, author of the Mishnah, wanted to offer a succinct prescription for leading a good and honorable life, he wrote: "Contemplate three things, and you will not come to the hands of transgression: Know what is above from you: a seeing eye, a listening ear, and that all your deeds are always being inscribed in a book" (Ethics of the Fathers 2:1).

From a biblical perspective, the days of our lives are the pages of a book we write while we are here on earth. Its contents are completely known to the Creator and there will come a time when we will be held accountable for every one of its

entries. It is far more than a diary; it is an unvarnished testament to our successes as well as our failures. It is the legacy we leave for the future that testifies to the worth-whileness of our existence. It includes everything in which we take pride but also all those things from which, in retrospect, we turn away with rueful embarrassment.

The Midrash offers a beautiful insight into the actions of prominent biblical heroes. It tells us that had Reuben, Jacob's first born son, known that the Torah would record that he saved Joseph from the pit into which he was thrown by his brothers, he would've done far more than simply rescue him; he would have carried Joseph on his shoulders the entire great distance to his father. Had Aaron brother of Moses, known that his selfless acceptance of God's appointment of his younger brother as leader of the Jewish people instead of himself would be acknowledged by a verse in the book of Exodus, he would have demonstrated his approval of the divine will by singing and dancing with timbrels. Had Boaz known that his kindness to Ruth by offering her six measures of grain would become part of a biblical text he would have feted her with stuffed calves and delicacies.

The point is profound. Even the good that we do would be enhanced manifold if we felt that it would not remain secret. And in the eyes of God there is no such thing as a private life, whether our actions make it into the book He authored or the one each one of us writes for eternity.

God's constant surveillance, unlike human spying, is meant as reminder of our mission to make our lives meaningful.

Our ancestors knew nothing of the technological threats to privacy. They could hardly imagine Internet hacking, cell phone data mining, spying cameras or any of the other myriad ways in which it is now possible to be privy to the most personal details of another person. Yet those guided by faith lived every moment with the certainty that nothing they did could avoid being seen by the One to whom they owed total allegiance. And this awareness, far from being viewed as an ever present and undesirable intrusion on their privacy, was considered a blessing that allowed them to constantly strive to give priority to their better selves.

To know that God is watching everything we do encourages us to lead ethical lives that won't shame us in the eyes of our creator. God's constant surveillance, unlike human spying, is meant as reminder of our mission to make our lives meaningful by His standards and to spur us to holiness even when He is the only one taking notice of what we're doing.

"He's Watching!"

One of the beautiful stories told about the famous Rabbi known as the Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, tells of his being given a lift, as he wearily trudged from one town to another, by a carriage driver who had no idea of the identity of his passenger. Riding through a deserted area bounded by lush and unguarded fruit trees, the driver stopped to steal part of the crop and decided to enlist the aid of his fellow traveler. "I'm going to pick as much as I can and I ask you just to do me one small favor. If you see anyone looking, please call out to me immediately so we can flee and I won't get caught." No sooner did the carriage driver begin his illegal task than the rabbi began to shout, "He sees, he sees!"

Frightened, the carriage driver rushed back to his seat, hurried off and asked the rabbi, "By the way, where is the one who saw?"

The rabbi's response was simply to point heavenward and, giving emphasis to his first word, he repeated, "He saw."

Believers have always known the reality that nothing is ever totally private. There is a great deal of truth in the response of Google's Eric Schmidt who years ago told an interviewer, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place."

from: Mordechai Tzion <toratravaviner@yahoo.com> reply-to: ravaviner-owner@yahoo.com to: ravaviner@yahoo.com date: Tue, Jun 11, 2013 at 11:52 AM subject: [ravaviner] **Eulogy for Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth**, author of "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata"

Mordechai Tzion <toratravaviner@yahoo.com> Jun 11
Images are not displayed. Display images below - Always display images from toratravaviner@yahoo.com Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner's Eulogy for Ha-Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth ztz"l: The Gaon "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" On the 3rd of Tammuz, at the age of 86, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth ztz"l ascended on high, after many years of learning and teaching Torah. The book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" requires no advertising. It is found in virtually every home of G-d-fearing Jews, and is used by Torah scholars and the masses alike. But his genius is virtually unknown. People do not know that he wrote other books: Kitzur Dinei Shemitah

Karkaot (Concise Laws of Shemitah), Ohel Sarah – On the Laws of Family Purity, Chinuch Ha-Banim Le-Mitzvot (Educating Children for Mitzvot), an halachic guide for nurses in hospitals and tens of articles and hundreds of halachic ruling quoted in other books. And his traits were those of a great Torah scholar – humble, inconspicuous and not out for publicity. He did not speak about himself but devoted all of his strength for the good of Hashem, His Torah and His Nation. It is possible to see one thing clearly in his book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata": he is the faithful student of Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. He learned from him since his youth in Yeshivat Kol Torah, and he established the rulings in his book based on his words. In fact, the foundation of a Torah scholar (Talmid Chacham) is being the literal meaning of that title: the student of a Sage, a faithful student, a devoted student, a student who sits in the dust of his Rabbi's feet. His students obviously know him well, students of Yeshivat Kol Torah and also the students of the Yeshivot he established: Pnei Shmuel Le-Tze'erim, Chochmat Shlomo, Netivot Chochmah, and he was also known in the Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital, where he was the Posek. But, in truth, this is improper from our perspective. Before recognizing a Torah scholar's wisdom, one needs to recognize his fear of Heaven. If there is no fear, there is no wisdom. We have now merited the third edition of the book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata", 45 years after the first edition in which the author relates his life story under the title: "It is good to show gratitude to Hashem". Obviously, it is without a trace of self-promotion, rather in order to relate the incredible kindnesses of Hashem for his family and for himself, and for the great miracles Hashem performed for him. Ha-Rav, the son of Ha-Rav Aharon Neuwirth, grew up on Berlin, Germany, when Hitler – may his name be blotted out – rose to power. He and his brother were sent on a "Kindertransport", children's transfer, to good-hearted Jewish families in Belgium. Much later, his parents also left Germany, on account of a special permit of the Queen of Holland for 42 Rabbis. The children were then reunited with their parents in Holland. But Holland itself was conquered by the Nazis – may their names be blotted out, and they were also unable to obtain food since there did not have food-ration cards. The underground supplied them with forged food-ration cards and this is how they survived for years. Their little money ran out. The Jews of the underground then requested from the leaders of the underground to appoint a Rabbi for them, just like – Lehavdil – the non-Jews have a priest. Their request was answered, and his father, Ha-Rav Aharon, was appointed the Rabbi of the underground, and this brought with it a salary – which in and of itself was a great wonder. But there is no end to the miracles which occurred for them. We will only mention a few. The Nazis once burst into their apartment searching for Jews and discovered the Aron Kodesh and they inquired about it. Ha-Rav Aharon, who was filled with Emunah and feared nothing, opened the Aron Kodesh and showed them the Sefer Torah. "What is written in it", they asked. He replied in German: "It says: Do not murder." "What else," they asked. He said: "Love your fellow as yourself." [And this next sentence does not appear in the book, but I heard it]: He added: "I am obligated to cling to Torah. You do what you are obligated to do, and I will do what I am obligated to do". A great miracle occurred and the Germans accepted his words and did not touch him. They wished him good night and left. Later on, all the Jews were arrested and brought to a huge prison hall. When Rosh Hashanah arrived, Ha-Rav Aharon pulled out a Shofar, which was hidden under his jacket. They covered themselves with jackets, and he blew the Shofar three times, and miraculously, they were not discovered. In the end, they were released for a reason unclear to this day. Ha-Rav Aharon sent his daughter to work as a house-keeper for a non-Jewish Dutch family, since she did not have a Jewish-looking face, and he hoped to save her in this way. But they required her to work harder on Shabbat than any other day in preparation for Sunday, which is a holiday for the Christians. After a few Shabbatot, Ha-Rav Aharon decided to bring her back, even though she was safe there and well fed. But on account of the Shabbat desecration, it was impossible to continue. She returned home on a Friday, and on Sunday they heard that that family had been killed on Shabbat by an aerial bomb. Indeed "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" – observing Shabbat according to the Halachah – saved them. Baruch Hashem, the war ended. Our Rav, Ha-Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth ztz"l, went to the port in Marce, France in order to travel to Eretz Yisrael, but they told him to board on the ship on Shabbat. This greatly bothered him: "During all of the difficult years of the war, I succeeded in observing Shabbat and how is it possible that now with the liberation, I will desecrate it." But his situation was desperate and it appeared to be life-threatening to remain in a strange place, with no money, no food and no place to go. He was forced to board the ship but he regretted it for many years, especially since it became clear much later that it was a deception of Shabbat-Desecrators who wanted the religious to violate Shabbat. He then took it upon himself that if Hashem merits him, he would do something for Shabbat, and later the idea came to write the book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata". When he arrived in Israel, he was captured by the British,

released and then people advised him to work for his substance and to help his parents come to Israel. But his deepest aspiration was to completely devote himself to Torah learning. He asked his father what to do, and he responded in a letter: The One who has helped up to now will continue to help! We went through five years of the Holocaust in for our son to learn Torah! You will learn only Torah. And our Rav wrote: "After years of physical salvation during the war, I was saved again, but this time it was spiritual salvation." May we merit learning the book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" in breadth and in depth, and may we merit following in the path of Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon ztz"l, his modest, his humility and his great devotion to Hashem. May his soul be bound up with the bonds of the living with all of the Tzadikim.

from: genesis@torah.org to: rabbiwein@torah.org date: Wed, Jun 12, 2013 at 10:05 PM subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Chukas

Rabbi Berel Wein To sponsor an edition of the Rabbi Berel Wein e-mail list, click here

Parshas Chukas Humans are Irrational The Torah interrupts its narrative of the events that befell the Jewish people in the desert with the description of a commandment that admittedly has no rational human understanding in logical terms. Even the great King Solomon, the wisest and most analytical of all humans, was forced to admit that understanding this parsha of the Torah was beyond his most gifted intellect and talents.

If the Torah is meant to instruct us in life and its values, to improve and influence our behavior and lifestyle and to help us achieve our goal of being a holy people then why insert this parsha in the Torah when it can seemingly have no practical impact on our daily life or broaden our understanding of God's omnipresence in our lives?

Though there is a section of Mishna devoted to the laws and halachic technicalities of the sacrifice of the "red cow" it does not deal with the underlying motives for the existence of this commandment and it also does not address why this parsha is inserted in the midst of the description of the events that occurred in the desert to the generation of Jews who left Egypt and stood at Mount Sinai.

We have historical record and description in the Mishna and from non-rabbinic sources as to the actual performance of the commandment in Temple times. This comes as a reminder of our necessary obedience to God's commandments even if they are not always subject to actual human understanding. Yet, some glimmer of comprehension is demanded by us to make this parsha meaningful to us.

I think that perhaps the Torah comes to point out the very fact that human life is in fact always irrational and that human behavior many times defies any logic or good sense. How could the generation that left Egypt and witnessed the revelation at Sinai complain about food when there was adequate Heavenly food? How could they prefer Egypt or the desert itself over living in the Land of Israel? And how could Moshe's and Aharon's own tribe and relatives rise against them in defiant and open rebellion?

Are these not basically incoherent and irrational decisions with a terrible downside to them? And yet they occurred and continue to recur constantly in Jewish and general life throughout history. In spite of our best efforts and our constant delusion that we exist in a rational world, the Torah here comes to inform us that that is a false premise.

If everyday life defies logic and accurate prediction then it is most unfair and in fact illogical to demand of Torah and God to provide us with perfect understanding of commandments and laws. The Torah inserts this parsha into the middle of its narrative about the adventures of the Jewish people in the desert to point out that the mysteries of life abound in the spiritual world just as they do in the mundane and seemingly practical world.

One of the great lessons of Judaism is that we are to attempt to behave rationally even if at the very same time, we realize that much in our personal and national lives is simply beyond our understanding.

Shabat shalom

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from: genesis@torah.org reply-to: genesis@torah.org to:
weekly-halacha@torah.org date: Thu, Jun 13, 2013 at 12:05 PM subject:
Weekly Halacha - Chukas - Blessings for Pleasant Fragrances

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

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Parshas Chukas Blessings for Pleasant Fragrances Just as one may not derive pleasure from food or drink before reciting a proper blessing, so too, one may not enjoy a pleasant fragrance before reciting the appropriate blessing. 1 There are four² different types of blessings that can be recited over pleasant³ fragrances 4:

1. Borei atzei vesamim: Recited over fragrant shrubs and trees or their flowers (e.g., myrtle, roses⁵).
2. Ha-nosein⁶ reich tov ba-perios: Recited over fragrant, edible fruits or nuts. Many poskim rule that nowadays, when fruits are generally grown for their taste and not for their smell, one should avoid smelling these fruits, since it is questionable if a blessing is required. 7 During the entire Yom Tov of Succos, the esrog should not be smelled at all. 8
3. Borei isvei vesamim: Recited over fragrant herbs, grasses or flowers.
4. Borei minei vesamim: Recited over a blend of spices of different species or of undetermined species. It is also recited over pleasant fragrances of animal origin, e.g., musk. On Motza'ei Shabbos, the proper blessing is Borei minei vesamim—no matter what type of fragrance is being used. 9

The blessing is recited immediately before one intends to smell the pleasant fragrance. B'diavad, one may recite the blessing within a few seconds after he smelled a pleasant fragrance. 10

Question: Are there situations where one would not recite a blessing over a pleasant fragrance?

Discussion: A blessing over a pleasant fragrance is recited only over an object whose purpose is to exude a pleasant fragrance. If the object is primarily for another purpose—even if the object is sweet-smelling—no blessing is recited. 11 Some examples:

- One enters a kitchen while food is being cooked or baked. Since the purpose of the cooking or baking is not to create a pleasant aroma, no blessing is recited. 12
- Flowers in a vase exude a pleasant fragrance. Since people usually buy flowers for their beauty, one who walks by and smells them does not recite a blessing. If, however, the flowers are picked up and smelled, a blessing must be recited.
- The fragrant smell of a backyard garden, etc. does not require a blessing. This is because a garden is usually planted for its beauty, not for its smell. If, however, one bends over and cups a flower in his hands in order to smell it, a blessing must be said. 13
- Some florists display flowers so that their fragrance will attract customers. In such a case, the proper blessing must be recited over the fragrance even if one did not pick the flowers up and—according to many poskim—even if he has no intention of smelling them. 14 If, however, the flowers are displayed just for their beauty, or are packed up for storage, no blessing is said even though the flowers smell good. 15
- A cup of coffee is poured for the purpose of drinking. No blessing is said over the aroma since the purpose of pouring the coffee is for drinking and not for its aroma. If, however, one specifically opens a fresh jar of coffee in order to smell it, a blessing is recited. 16 No blessing should be recited over instant coffee. 17
- No blessing is recited over air purifiers, deodorants, soaps, etc., since their purpose is to remove foul odors. 18 In addition, many poskim rule that no blessing is recited over perfume, since its fragrance is a result of chemical processes, not natural ones. 19
- Smelling an item to test if it smells good or if it is fit for purchase does not necessitate a blessing. 20

1. O.C. 216:1. A berachah acharonah, however, was not instituted for pleasant fragrances; Mishnah Berurah 216:4. 2. A fifth type of blessing, rarely recited, is Borei shemen areiv. This is recited over sweet-smelling oil derived from the balsam tree grown in Eretz Yisrael. 3. One who does not enjoy a particular fragrance does not recite a blessing. 4. We have listed the blessings in order of priority when one is reciting blessing on more than one type of fragrance; see Peri

Megadim 216:19. 5. Mishnah Berurah 216:17. 6. This is the nusach which is quoted by most poskim and all siddurim. Chayei Adam 61:2 and Mishnah Berurah 216:9, however, substitute Asher nosan for ha-nosein. 7. See Chazon Ish, O.C. 35:5-7, and Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 177. 8. Mishnah Berurah 216:53 and Beur Halachah, s.v. ha-meiriach. See Halichos Shelomo 1:23-37, that an esrog which will be used on Succos should not be smelled even before the Yom Tov begins. 9. Mishnah Berurah 297:1. Even if fruit is used; Aruch ha-Shulchan 297:4. 10. Halichos Shelomo 1:23-38. 11. O.C. 217:2. See also Mishnah Berurah 217:1; 216:11. 12. Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 216:46. 13. Ruling of Rav Y.Y. Fisher (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 178); Az Nidberu 14:11. 14. Mishnah Berurah 217:1-2 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 3 and 7. See Aruch ha-Shulchan 217:1-3 and Kaf ha-Chayim 217:2 who rule that one should not recite the blessing unless he intends to smell the flowers. 15. If they are picked up in order to be smelled, a blessing is recited. See note 16 for the view of Chazon Ish. 16. Mishnah Berurah 216:16. Chazon Ish (O.C. 35:5-7), however, rules that if the coffee jar is going to be returned to the kitchen, then no blessing may be recited over it. In his view, a blessing is recited only when the spices are designated for smelling only and serve no other purpose. 17. Rav Y.Y. Fisher (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 174). 18. Mishnah Berurah 217:10; 216:41; Aruch ha-Shulchan 217:5. 19. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 61, note 32). This is also the view of Rav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 132, concerning Havdalah) and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 181 and Avnei Yashfei 2:16). 20. Kaf ha-Chayim 216:3; Rav C.P. Scheinberg (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 179).

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from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ykaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Sun, Jun 9, 2013 at 7:22 AM subject: When do i say birchas hagomeil?
In parshas Chukas, the Torah alludes to a miraculous salvation that the Bnei Yisrael experienced prior to entering the Holyland. Certainly an appropriate time to discuss:

What warrants Birchas Hagomeil? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Situation #1: "Frequent Flyer?!" "I daven in an Ashkenazi shul, and a Sefardi fellow who attends the shul who must be some incredible, frequent flyer. He seems to recite birchas hagomeil every Monday and Thursday, whether or not they give him an aliyah."

Question #2: Infrequent Flyer "I do not understand why we bensch goimel when we fly over the ocean, but not when flying over land. It is just as dangerous to fly overland — as a matter of fact, it is actually somewhat safer to fly over water, since there is a far greater chance of surviving a crash landing at sea than on land."

Question #3: Recuperating "I recently underwent some surgery. At what point do I recite birchas hagomeil?"

Answer: Our Sages instituted a beracha, called birchas hagomeil, which is recited when someone has been saved from four different types of treacherous predicaments: those who traveled by sea, those who journeyed through the desert, someone who was ill and recovered, and someone who was captured and gained release (Berachos 54b). In a different essay, I discussed the Biblical and Talmudic sources for this beracha, the requirements to recite it in the presence of ten people and its relationship to the reading of the Torah. This essay will discuss some of the circumstances for which one recites birchas hagomeil.

How much traveling? One of the four instances for which the Gemara requires birchas hagomeil is surviving a trip through a desert. However, when the Rambam quotes this Gemara, he states, "those who traveled on intercity roads recite birchas hagomeil when they arrive at a settled place," instead of "those who traveled through the desert." The authorities dispute what the Rambam means. The Tur

assumes that he means that one recites birchas hagomeil after any trip. This is the position held by the Ramban, who writes that the Gemara mentioned those who traveled through the desert only because that is the context of the verse in Tehillim, but that anyone traveling recites birchas hagomeil upon reaching his destination safely. For this reason, the Ramban and the Avudraham record that many Sefardim recite birchas hagomeil for any out-of-town trip, for, to quote the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachos 4:4), kol haderachim bechezkas sakanah, "all highways should be assumed to be dangerous."

The Rosh, however, disagrees with the Ramban, contending that there is a difference between tefillas haderech, which one recites for any trip, and birchas hagomeil, which one recites only when one would be required to offer a korban todah. In the Rosh's opinion, the statement kol haderachim bechezkas sakanah means that one should recite tefillas haderech any time one travels between cities, but not that one should recite birchas hagomeil upon one's return. Reflecting this approach, the Rosh and Rabbeinu Yonah mention that, in France and Germany, the practice was to refrain from reciting birchas hagomeil when traveling from one city to the next.

The Bach also follows this approach and takes issue with the Tur's interpretation of the Rambam. He contends that the Rambam agrees that someone traveling through an area where food and water can be readily obtained does not recite birchas hagomeil afterwards. The Bach suggests that the Tur was not quoting the Rambam, but the Ramban, and that scribes erred while redacting.

How far? The Beis Yosef rules that one should not recite birchas hagomeil or tefillas haderech if his trip takes him a parsah, a distance of somewhat less than two and a half miles, outside a city. In practical terms, many Sefardim recite birchas hagomeil only after an intercity trip that took longer than 72 minutes, regardless of the distance covered or the method of transportation (Shu't Yabia Omer 2: Orach Chayim #14).

Port call Does someone on an extensive sea voyage recite birchas hagomeil each time his ship docks or only when he has reached his final destination?

If the ship pulls into port for a day or two, one does not recite birchas hagomeil until the voyage is over (Bach and Elyah Rabbah 219:1, quoting Olas Tamid; Mishnah Berurah 219:1 adds that this also holds true if someone traveling through the desert visits a city en route). However, the Bach is uncertain whether one should recite birchas hagomeil if he will be in port for an extended period of time before continuing his voyage. He also writes that someone who survives a mishap at sea should refrain from reciting birchas hagomeil until he arrives ashore. At this point, the traveler should recite birchas hagomeil on the entire voyage, including the specific accident that he, fortunately, survived.

The Biur Halacha discusses whether one travelling a short trip by river on a raft should recite birchas hagomeil. He says that it depends on the above-mentioned dispute between Ashkenazim and Sefardim whether one recites birchas hagomeil for a short intercity land trip. According to minhag Ashkenaz, that one does not recite birchas hagomeil for a short trip, one should not recite birchas hagomeil for a trip by raft; whereas, according to minhag Sefard, which recites birchas hagomeil even for a short intercity trip, one should recite birchas hagomeil for a short river trip.

Travels daily The Minchas Yitzchak (4:11) was asked by someone who lived in Copenhagen, whose livelihood required him to travel among the nearby Danish Islands of the Baltic Sea, whether he was required to recite birchas hagomeil every time he traveled through the sea, in which case he would be reciting it almost daily.

To answer the question, the Minchas Yitzchak refers to a responsum of the Avnei Nezer, who asks why the text of the beracha is that the traveler was chayov, guilty. The Avnei Nezer explains that there could be one of two reasons why this traveler undertook this trip: one alternative is that he felt a compelling need to travel, for parnasah or some other reason, in which case he should ask himself why Hashem presented him with such a potentially dangerous situation. The traveler should contemplate this issue and realize that he needs to do teshuvah for something -- which now explains why the beracha calls him "guilty."

The other alternative is that the traveler could have avoided the trip, in which case he is considered guilty, because he endangered himself unnecessarily.

Based on the above-quoted Avnei Nezer, who explained why all four categories of people who recite birchas hagomeil are categorized as "guilty," the Minchas Yitzchak concludes one does not recite birchas hagomeil if one lives in a place where sea travel is required each day. One cannot label a person as "guilty" for living in a place that is accepted to be a normal place to live, and if a recognized livelihood in such a place requires daily sea travel, this is not considered placing oneself in unnecessary danger.

Airplane travel Does someone who travels by airplane recite birchas hagomeil?

In researching the different teshuvos written on this subject, I found a wide range of halachic opinion. Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that anyone traveling by airplane

must recite birchas hagomeil, regardless as to whether he was traveling over sea or over land, exclusively. He contends that even those authorities who rule that one should recite birchas hagomeil only for the four types of calamities mentioned in Tehillim and the Gemara also require birchas hagomeil for flying, since flying by air is identical to traveling by ship, as the entire time that one is above ground, one's longterm life plans are all completely dependent on one's safe return to land (Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 2:59). I found a ruling basically identical to Rav Moshe's that cited a different reason. One should recite birchas hagomeil, not because air travel should be compared to seafaring, but because we rule that one recites birchas hagomeil for any type of danger to which one is exposed (Shu't Betzeil Hachachmah 1:20).

Rav Ovadyah Yosef rules that Sefardim should recite birchas hagomeil after any air trip that takes longer than 72 minutes, just as they recite birchas hagomeil after any trip on land that takes this long (Shu't Yabia Omer 2: Orach Chayim #14).

On the other hand, many contend that, since this is a different method of travel from what was included in the original takanas Chazal, and, in addition, air travel today is not highly dangerous, one should not recite birchas hagomeil, at least not with the Names of Hashem, out of the concern that this might result in a beracha levatalah (Shu't Chelkas Yaakov 2:9; Rav Sion Levy, in his question to Rav Ovadyah Yosef, published in Shu't Yabia Omer, Orach Chayim II #14).

According to what we have written thus far, there should be no distinction drawn as to the length of the flight or whether it traverses land or sea. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein's approach, one should always recite birchas hagomeil for air flight, and according to those who dispute this approach, one should not. Notwithstanding the strong logic, there is a prevalent custom that people bensch gomeil when flying overseas, but not when flying domestically. The Be'er Moshe (2:68) notes this practice, which he feels has very weak halachic foundation. Nevertheless, since this is the prevalent custom, he attempts to justify it and says that people should follow the custom.

How sick? How ill must a person have been to require that he recite birchas hagomeil upon his recovery? I am aware of three opinions among the rishonim concerning this question.

(1) Some hold that one recites birchas hagomeil even for an ailment as minor as a headache or stomach ache (Aruch).

(2) Others contend that one recites birchas hagomeil only if he was ill enough to be bedridden, even when he was not dangerously ill (Ramban, Toras Ha'adam, page 49; Hagahos Maimoniyus, Berachos 10:6, quoting Rabbeinu Yosef).

(3) A third approach holds that one should recite birchas hagomeil only if the illness was potentially life threatening (Rama).

The prevalent practice of Sefardim, following the Shulchan Aruch, is according to the second approach -- reciting birchas hagomeil after recovery from any illness which made the person bedridden. The prevalent Ashkenazic practice is to recite birchas hagomeil only when the illness was life threatening, notwithstanding the fact that the Bach, who was a well-respected Ashkenazic authority, concurs with the second approach.

How recuperated? At what point do we assume that the person is recuperated enough that he can recite the birchas hagomeil for surviving his travail? The poskim rule that he does not recite birchas hagomeil until he is able to walk well on his own (Elyah Rabbah; Mishnah Berurah).

Chronic illness The halachic authorities rule that someone who suffers from a chronic ailment and had a life threatening flareup recites birchas hagomeil upon recovery from the flareup, even though he still needs to deal with the ailment that caused the serious problem (Tur).

Conclusion Rav Hirsch (Commentary to Tehillim 100:1) notes that the root of the word for thanks is the same as that for viduy, confession and admitting wrongdoing. All kinds of salvation should elicit in us deep feelings of gratitude for what Hashem has done for us in the past and does in the present. This is why the blessing can be both an acknowledgement of guilt and, at the same time, an expression of the thanks that we owe Hashem.

We often cry out to Hashem in crisis, sigh in relief when the crisis passes, but fail to thank Him adequately for the salvation. Our thanks to Hashem should match the intensity of our pleas. Birchas hagomeil gives us a concrete beracha to say to awaken our thanks for deliverance. And even in our daily lives, when, hopefully, we do not encounter dangers that meet the criteria of saying birchas hagomeil, we should still fill our hearts with thanks, focusing these thoughts during our recital of mizmor lesodah, az yashir, modim or at some other point in our prayer.