

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON CHUKAS - 5764

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From: Josh Rapps <jr@sco.COM> To: mj-ravtorah@shamash.org Subject: Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"L on Parshas Chukas Date: Thu, 27 Jun 1996 chukas
SHIUR HARAV SOLOVEICHIK ZTL
ON PARSHAS CHUKAS

The Rav was always intrigued by certain figures in Tanach. The ones who were hated because they were ahead of their times. Especially Moshe who was the greatest of all men. However he was also the most tragic of men. Chukas describes the full extent of the paradoxical tragedy of his life.

The portion of Chukas should have been appended to either Terumah, Ki Tisa, Tzav or Shemini. According to tradition, the Parshas Parah was given at the same time as the Torah tells us about Moshe and Aaron initiating the service in the Mishkan, when the Parshas Melum was revealed. We could also imagine that it would be inserted into Tazria Metzora which deals with the laws of Tumah and the Parsha of Parah deals with Tumas Mes. Parshas Parah would have completed the institution of Tumah. The Torah instead inserted the Parshas Parah between Korach and the death of Miriam and the arrival of Bnai Yisrael in Midbar Tzin. We must understand why Parshas Parah was inserted in Chukas.

The Rav raised several questions. The first had to do with the order of shelach korach and chukas. What is in common between these parshios? Also, where is the continuity between first part of chukas that deals with Parshas Parah and Midbar Tzin, death of Miriam, the May Meriva and the desire to pass through Edom on their way to the Promised Land?

According to Chazal, Chukah means a mysterious or enigmatic law. They detected in the word Chok an inherent incomprehensibility by man. The enemies of Israel always ask why we keep them. Chazal have never tried to rationalize it (although Rashi quotes Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan who tried to give it an interpretation). Chazal have said that we must accept Chukah, without requesting explanation or motivation. Chazal regard that chukah requires and asks that we suspend our judgement. Sometimes man has to use his ability to reason, the greatest gift given to him by Hashem. In certain situations it must be suspended and man must obey the letter of the law. However, even though we can't ask for motivation or reason in Chukah, we may still inquire into the interpretation of the law. There is a difference between explanation and interpretation. Some disciplines deal with interpretation while others deal with explanation. Explanation answers the question of why or how. Physics doesn't ask "why" which is a metaphysical question. It asks "how" does it function. By establishing dependence of phenomena in terms of mathematical equations the answer of "how" is given. There are other areas that we don't explain at all rather we interpret the event. Not "how" or "why" rather "what" is it. The answer is descriptive, (e.g. botany). The first question is what. You go to other disciplines to explain the how.

With Chukim and Mishpatim we don't ask "why". Often it is foolish to ask "why" even in mitzvos that we consider meaningful. Usually motive lies outside my reach. The ultimate answer of why is because the will of Hashem is that it be done. Realization of the will of Hashem is the greatest ultimate goal. However we can ask "what is Parah Adumah to me", not why did Hashem ordain the law. What is the spiritual message of Parshas Parah that I can assimilate to my world view and world outlook? Ramban and Rambam emphasized time and again that Avodah Shblev includes more than Tefila. It tells man how to live and worship Hashem. Avoda Shblev must be present in every act, religious and moral. The Ramban

gives as an example of Avoda Shblev in Chagiga on the verse Oveyd Elokim Vlo Avado. Oveyd Elokim is a separate quality that even a Tzaddik might not have. The example given is one who learns 100 times versus learning 101 times. For instance, if I enter a Sukkah because of the rain I am still fulfilling the mitzvah. The Ramban asks would such a person be called a Oveyd Elokim? The Ramban says no, to be called Oveyd Elokim there must be an expression of love to Hashem and enjoyment in fulfilling the Mitzvah. Misnagdim also can enjoy a Mitzvah. Chassidus added Avodas Elokim not only to discharge the Mitzvah but to rejoice and enjoy the Mitzvah. Avodas Elokim is unattainable if the Chok does not deliver a message to us. If there is no idea generated by the chok how can I rejoice in the mitzvah. The logos must be involved in the action or Mitzvah so that we understand it in order for us to enjoy the Mitzvah and rejoice in it. To involve the logos, it must understand the mitzvah. Not "why", sometimes not "how", but always "what".

We have a duty to interpret chukim. It is forbidden to ask why Hashem ordered us to act in such an unintelligible way. However I can ask what does the mitzvah mean to me. I must be able to make the mitzvah an integral part of my religious experience. The Ramban says regarding Shiluach Hakan that I can't say that the Torah is concerned with the feeling of the mother bird. I can't ask why the Mitzvah was ordered but I can ask how I can assimilate the mitzvah in my total religious and moral outlook and I awareness. I am obligated to raise this question.

We look at Parah Adumah through the "what" question not "why". Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan did not attempt to explain the "why" of Parah Adumah, rather the what of the mitzvah. According to him, it was an atonement for the golden calf. How am I to experience the Parah Adumah? When I say Shema, I experience the closeness to Hashem. But what am I supposed to experience when we hear Parshas Parah? What is the central mitf of Parah Adumah? What is so peculiar about the Parsha and what does the uniqueness of the mitzvah consist of? Why do we consider Parah Adumah special? There are other mitzvas that appear non-rational as well, e.g. Shatnes and Sair Hamishtaleach. Yet, Chazal considered Parah Adumah representative of all Chukim as the chok par excellence.

We will do well to abandon the popular approach to the Parsha, of looking at the ceremonial aspects of the parsha, the aspect of purifying the unclean and unpurifying the clean. Even though there is a prohibition of Shecutay Chutz we were still ordered to bring certain Korbanos outside. The mixing of the ashes with the water is peculiar. These are intriguing questions, however the singularity of Parah Adumah lies elsewhere. We should ignore the Parshas Parah and the laws of burning and mixing with spring water. After that we have a topic of Adam Ki Yamus B'ohel. Nothing of Mes was mentioned in Tazria Metzora. In Emor and Naso we have a hint of Tumas Mes. Yet we could not derive that there is a concept of Tumas Mes from these [laces, as perhaps it is prohibited but it does not defile. The first time we hear that Tumas Mes defiles is in Parah Adumah. Tumas Mes differs from all other kinds of Tumah. Something about Mes is different. The Torah never says Adam Ki Yameh Bsherez. However the Torah uses solemn terminology of Zos Hatorah Adam Ki Yamus Bohel. What is this solemnity? Because Tumas Meas has a singular, strange aspect from all other kinds of Tumah. For example, a kohen can touch a sheretz but not a Mes. Same with Nazir. (The Rav said that he spoke with a scholar in Chachmas Yisrael who said that a parchment was found that that says that a kohen is forbidden to be Metamy Lsherez. The Rav asked if he, the scholar, accepted it as true, and the scholar replied yes, that it must be true. The Rav said that in the days that the parchment was written there was no shortage of ignorance either, similar to the ignorance of Torah that is evident these days as well. The Rav said that whoever wrote that parchment was ignorant as well.)

Already we see the uniqueness of Tumas Mes. The method of cleansing the unclean person from Tumah is different. In all other Tumos, immersion in a Mikveh is the method for removing the Tumah. Tumas Mes is different. It requires Tevila and sprinkling of May Chatos twice (days 3,7) otherwise the person is enjoined from entering the Mikdash. Why did the Torah single out Tumas Mes and why is immersion in a Mikveh not sufficient to cleanse the person like all other Tumos? What lies at the root of Tumas Mes that makes it so unique? We are impressed by the onus placed on the person to guarantee that he has sprinkling on days 3,7. Why is the Torah so emphatic here that we not take the sprinkling lightly and that we not equate Tumas Mes with other kinds of Tumah. Why is the sprinkling central?

We must understand "what" is the message the Parah Adumah is telling us. In the peculiar method of sprinkling we find the uniqueness of man as a great yet tragic man. Why should man, the greatest of creatures in the universe exist in distress and his life be a tragic one? In addition to the physical difference in process between Tevila and sprinkling May Chatos, there is a semantic difference. Tevila and Hazaya are distinct experiences from a religious perspective. For example,

conversion requires Tevila, there is an experience associated with it. There is also an experience associated with sprinkling, because the Torah emphasizes that we should not short change the sprinkling. The difference is that Tevila is accomplished by the Tamay himself while Hazaya is done by someone else. Tevila requires that the Tamay himself must immerse himself and bow his head and knees to immerse. No one else cleanses him, just himself. He emerges from Mikveh, Tahor because of his own effort. Had he been lazy or refused to immerse he can never attain holiness. Halachically it is an act performed by the Tamay. Al Pi Din, the act of Tevila is reflexive in nature. Man defiles himself, man must clean himself alone. No one else can pronounce him Tahor if he himself does not do it. Human capability to accomplish change in status, human initiative and ability to raise self to new heights is through Tevila. It is the symbol of free will. If one wants to stay tamay never immerse in mikveh. Want to be Tahor, immerse. It is up to the individual

With regards to Hazaya the situation is reversed. The Tamay can't sprinkle May Chatos on himself simply because he is a Tamay. Only a Tahor, someone else, can sprinkle it on him. This is the antithesis of Tevila. The human who defiled himself can't free himself from the state of uncleanness. Someone else, who has the ability to restore purity for others and help them (not all are capable), must sprinkle the May Chatos on the Tamay. This is quite different from all other types of Tumah. Nowadays we can purify ourselves from all other Tumos. But the Tumas Mikdash, which prevents us from entering Har Habayis, requires not only the Parah Adumah but a Tahor that can sprinkle us. For this we have to wait till Moshiach arrives. Without Parah Adumah being sprinkled on him, man can't escape the Tumah that holds man in its clutches and won't let him go. Chazal have equated Tumah with Teshuva. Mikveh, the aspect of Tevila, is associated with Teshuva. The symbol of Hazayas Mayim was put in by Yechezkel. Sin requires both immersion in a Mikveh and sprinkling as well. Chet is equated with Tumas Mes which requires both Mikveh and sprinkling for Teshuva. With Teshuva, the initiative to repent starts with the sinner. If he is to vain to amend his ways and style of life Hashem will not help him. The initiative belongs to man, the final Kapparah to Hashem.

Tumas Mes is such a distinct Tumah and so difficult to remove because of the uniqueness of the experience man is confronted with when he comes in contact with a Mes. Other Tumos that are experienced e.g. Sheretz and Neveila, typically precipitate a negative aesthetic experience. It's abominable or obnoxious. The experience is derived from the fact that the Tuma is associated with disease and with the phenomenon and ugliness of a dead organism exposed to the elements and in the process of decomposition and disintegration. A Sheretz in this status is filth, squalor and causes unpleasant emotions to arise. All other Tumos can be subsumed experientially under such unpleasantness (e.g. Leprosy).

Tumas Mes constitutes a separate category beyond the experience associated with the status of the decomposing body. We experience something additional when we contact a dead human versus a dead animal. Death as far as the animal kingdom is concerned is not viewed by man as a catastrophe. It indicates the termination of functionality of the organism. However, a dead man indicates the end of a spiritual personality, no matter what he might have done while alive. While alive, man has an existential dimension that is self aware and self conscious, driven by vision and hope, one that grieves and despairs but lives in retrospection and anticipation and plans and builds and destroys worlds. Human death means destruction of a world. It is the most tragic human experience. Man who comes in contact with a dead person becomes aware of his own timed existence. He knows that while he lives he is committed to the service of Hashem. Chazal were worried about death because it would interfere with their great joy in engaging in Torah and Mitzvos. In the animal world, the death of an organism is not tragic because there is no individualistic existence among the beasts. The class will survive therefore the loss of the individual is not so tragic. The individual leads a representative existence for the class. The human has his own right to exist not only as a representative of others but on his own behalf. He leads an autonomous existence. The existential experience is to be found in the individual not in the class. That is why death in the individual is absurd and existentially abominable. The Rav related the story of the Rumanian dictator Causcescu who visited Sadat before the Yom Kippur War and advised him not to start a war with Israel. Sadat showed him a copy of Maariv that had a front page picture of a young boy in uniform who was killed and was being mourned by the nation. Sadat said that such a people can't live through an extended war of attrition when each dead individual is important and precious. The Rav noted that if there was a plebiscite on the separation agreement (NOTE: this was the proposed separation discussed after the Yom Kippur war, not the Peres-PLO agreements) it would pass even though the Israeli people knew that the agreement was not worth the paper it was written on. Because they will do anything to save a Jewish life, a world.

The spiritual death that is unique to man is the most frightening to man. Tumas Mes is a result of trauma, not ugliness, that shows that death defeats everyone eventually. That's why Tumas Mes is a Tumah per se. It represents the situation that makes man's life tragic and one that he can't save himself from. It is the absurd and tragic destiny of man. To clean oneself through the same process used for cleaning from Tumas Sheretz is non-sensical. It requires an additional form of cleansing besides Tevila, which was not abandoned. We require the sprinkling of the third and seventh day. The final cleanser is Hashem in the eschatological age when all nature will be cleansed of death then man will be free of this Tumah. Until that time comes, even though we can't defeat death now, at least partially we must fight it. We must do tevila. We have to do anything possible to extend life. Judaism believes that in the course of time man will succeed in taming the death monstrosity and limit its power. That's why tevila is in place. However Judaism was not naive to believe in human scientific capability to defeat death and make man immortal. Longevity can be achieved, but not immortality. Death will plague man until Hashem saves man from the curse of death for all time. How can man redeem himself from the fright and defilement of death? Through tevila, organized scientific effort to extend life. But death requires another component of Hazaya, that of placing our trust in Hashem that the age will come when Hashem will sprinkle the purifying water on man to complete the cleansing and erase death and the associated tuma forever. Zos Chukas Hatorah refers to death, the great, unintelligible mystery that no one can grasp. The greatest mystery is the fact of Adam Ki Yamus Bohel. Those that are in the tent at the time of death or who enter the tent are shocked and frightened by the experience. It is Hashem that cleanses ultimately the person from this tragic experience.

Between the end of Parshas Korach and the portion of Bnai Yisrael entering Midbar Tzin and the death of Miryam lies a gap of 38 years. Korach's rebellion happened by the second year in the desert. The death of Miryam happened in the fortieth year after the death of all the people sentenced to die in the desert because of the sin of the Meraglim. It is strange that the Torah discusses at length what happened the first 2 years in the desert. We don't know what happened during those intervening 38 years. What did Moshe do during those long and dreary years? That period was enigmatic and frightening.

We find a clue as to what happened in those 38 years from the bridge between the last words of Korach to the beginning of Parshas Parah. When Moshe reviews the travels of Bnai Yisrael after the Meraglim, in Parshas Devarim, he says that they spent 38 years circling Mount Sayir. He adds that Hashem confused them over those years. The 38 years were a period of Hester Panim. The people returned to Hashem, Vatashuvu Vativku Lifnei Hashem. This is an example of how in a time of Hester Panim the Tefila of the people is still rejected. The Rambam explains circular movement as without gain or achievement. The Rambam explains the circular movement of the heavenly bodies as their attempt to come close to Hashem yet they always fail and they start over again. So to the people in the desert. Bnai Yisrael tried to approach the mountain of Sayir but could not. Moshe added that the divine hand eliminated the previous generation as quickly as possible. It was a time of Hester Panim when no prayer was accepted and no heavenly communication reached man. Not even Moshe communicated with Hashem. It was like a long dark and dreary night.

The Gemara tells us that each year the whole congregation would dig graves for themselves on Tisha Bav and lie down in them that night. In the morning the call went out for those that were alive to arise from among the dead. The whole congregation died each Tisha Bav and some regained life the next day. They died 38 times in the desert. Life was no different from death. It was a life without hope and anticipation. Each one knew that they would end up eventually in one of those graves. People can never understand the will of Hashem in times of Hester Panim. They were confused and without communication with Hashem. It did not matter if they survived this year. Eventually they would die. They spent 38 years in a state dedicated to death and annihilation and separated from Hashem. The greatest of men, Moshe, had to wait for the redemption and sprinkling of the purification waters on Bnai Yisrael from Hashem to indicate that the period of death had ended. That is why the Torah says that when they came to Midbar Tzin they were all alive, that the period of darkness without hope had ended. The Torah talks about Chalah and Terumos and Maasros in Shelach and Korach, after they had been sentenced to wander in the desert, in order to tell the people that eventually they will come to Eretz Yisrael. The Torah tells the people that eventually there will be the sprinkling of the water on the people by Hashem after the period of Hester Panim. Now the dialogue with Moshe and the people must be suspended for 38 years until the generation of the Meraglim will die out. The episode at Midbar Tzin happened 38 years after the Parshas Parah was given.

After this we come to the end of Moshe and Aaron as well. The Parsha of Misa Moshe is the most tragic. He was chosen to redeem the people, he loved them so

much and received the Torah that spoke about the Mitzvos that were to be done in Eretz Yisrael. He wanted so much to see the land on his own. Yet Hashem forbade him to even pray about being permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael, something we don't find anywhere else. The death of Moshe is the most irrational of all. Death in general, and particular the death of Moshe is the most enigmatic of all. No matter the reason for Moshe's death, the fact is that Moshe died for the sin of the people. As it says in Devarim that Hashem was angry with Moshe for the sake of the people both at the Meraglim and May Meriva, as it says Beglalchem. In what regard were the people responsible for the death of Moshe? If Hashem got angry at Moshe, why should they be responsible for it? If Moshe's sin was hitting the rock instead of talking to it, this should have been overlooked for the gerat Moshe. The same question applies to the other reasons given for the denial of Moshe to enter Eretz Yisrael.

There was one major tragedy that marks the denial of Moshe to enter the land. It is the tragedy of the Rebbe who is too great to be understood by the people of his generation and his contemporaries. Even though there were individuals who received the Torah from Moshe and reflected and carried on his teachings, like Joshua and Eliezer, Moshe was the teacher par excellence of the entire generation that he delivered from bondage and carried throughout the desert. Why wasn't the entire congregation acting as the disciples of Moshe? Why only Joshua Eliezer and Pinchas? If they had Moshe as a teacher, why didn't they resist the temptations of the prostitutes of Moav. At the time of the golden calf, Moshe argued that they were still under the slave mentality and they needed time to outgrow that mentality. Moshe had a strong argument and it was accepted. The people of the exodus generation were not his disciples, they were the people who left Egypt and had not been trained yet by Moshe. He did not raise them as his teacher and parent yet.

However when they got to May Meriva and Shitim the generation of people that were alive at that time were the disciples of Moshe. When they complained to Moshe at May Meriva as to why he had taken them out of Egypt, Moshe was taken aback that the generation that he had trained over all those long years in the desert would use the same argument used by their ancestors of the previous generation who had not had the benefit of Moshe's tutelage throughout the long sojourn in the desert. Moshe realized that if he could not implant in them faith then he failed. They were no different than their parents who were liberated slaves 40 years ago in Refidim. That is why in the episode of Shitim and the prostitutes of Moav Moshe cried where he never cried before at the previous transgressions of the golden calf, even that of the Meraglim. Now he realized that he failed.

However Moshe did not fail. Rather he was at too high a level for the people to understand and appreciate him. That is why Moshe said that he was punished because of the people. Had they understood and appreciated his teachings of 40 years he would have been admitted to the promised land. For a recently freed slave no water is a rebellious event that can be rationalized and defended. However the people who were his disciples did not give in to their teacher and were unwilling to be his students and remained with the same rebellious attitude as their parents. Then the teacher, even though he did not sin, is punished for the deficiency of the people. Just like the teacher who must accompany his student into exile because his transgression is traced back to the teacher, so to Moshe was punished in place of the generation. That is why he said that it was because of them that he was denied entry, even though it was their fault and not his.

Of course the failure of Moshe to enter the land changed Jewish History because had he entered Eretz Yisrael, the people never would have been exiled. Moshe would have been anointed as Melech Hamoshiach. Jewish History would have found its fulfillment and realization immediately on entry. Moshe will always be the greatest of all men, greater than the Melech Hamoshiach, with regards to prophecy. Moshe the chosen of all men should have been chosen as Moshiach. If he was qualified, why was he not ordained by Hashem as the Moshiach? No one else will ever be as qualified as Moshe. The Messianic era would have commenced immediately and the land would have been endowed with Kedusha that the legions of Babylon never could have destroyed, as opposed to the Kedusha of Joshua which was temporary.

It was not Moshe's fault. He was ready to be the Moshiach. However the Messianic era depends on the people being ready as well. If Moshe's message had an impact on the people and if they treated him with respect due the Rebbe from his students, he would have been crowned Moshiach and they would have been the generation of Moshiach, a great merit in its own right. Instead his students behaved like the freed slaves of the previous generation. The messianic era was postponed for a long time. Moshe had to die without entering the land and Joshua was charged with bringing the people to Eretz Yisrael. Only when the people are ready to fully commit themselves to his teachings and Moshe will be accepted as teacher by entire Umay Yisraelis, when all will be willing to be his disciples, will the hour of redemption

arrive. In the meantime, because of the May Meriva the people were assigned a new job of conquering the land with Joshua. The opportunity of Moshe leading us into the land as Moshiach was lost and won't be regained for a long time. Jewish History became more complex and tragic. The Adam Ki Yamus Bohel referred to in Chukas was the greatest of all men, Moshe. We suffer the consequences in that the era of Moshiach was delayed.

The sequence of events of Chukas was the arrival in Midbar Tzin, followed by the death of Miryam the prophetess. The one who had faith and hope in her brother that she helped saved, died. Next we have the events at May Meriva with the edict that Moshe and Aaron would not enter the land. We might have expected that the death of Aaron would be the next event mentioned. Instead it is the refusal of Melech Edom to allow Bnai Yisrael to pass through his land and the turning away of the people. Why was this story mentioned here? It would have fit in nicely with the frame of reference of the battles with Sichon and Og. Also when Sichon and Og refused their request and went to battle, Moshe conquered them. However with Edom the people simply circled Edom and were left to contemplate their situation and failure. Edom was a weaker king relative to Sichon and Og who were mighty. Why were they enjoined from battling Edom at that time?

Because at that time no Jew, not even Moshe was allowed to set foot in the land of Edom. Instead they had to circle the land for many years. The only time that a Jew will be able to tread on the land of Edom will be when the Moshiach will rise up to the Mount Sayir and judge them as mentioned in the Midrash when Yaakov told Esau that he will visit him. Edom, the ancestor of Amalek, is the symbol of hostility displayed by the nations of the world towards Jacob. Edom is the mysterious person who makes the life of the Jew difficult. Once Moshe lost the majestic crown of Moshiach, Edom land became inviolate. Edom will exist as long as the Moshiach has not arrived. Once Hashem told Moshe that he would not bring them into the land and be the Moshiach, Edom was provided with security. Moshe lost the battle to bring the people through Edom. Moshe sent messengers to Edom and he realized that Edom would refuse and that Bnai Yisrael would have to back away. Because the age of Moshiach and judgement of Edom was postponed for many years to come. Moshe lost the crown and the people lost the opportunity to enter as the generation of Moshiach.

That is why the Torah narrates the story of Edom right after the May Meriva. Moshe lost the crown, we lost the opportunity to be the generation of Moshiach as indicated by our inability to conquer Edom and this is the connection to Parshas Parah and Chukas Hatorah.

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND
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Parshas Chukas

RavFrands List Rabbi Frand on Parshas Chukas -

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 "tavor" -- 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.

Effective Leadership Requires Being Able To Move Out Of The Picture

The parsha contains the "Song of the Well" [Bamidbar 21:17-20]. This song is symmetrical with the "Song of the Sea" in Parshas BeShalach.

Two weeks ago, we read Parshas Shlach, which includes the sending out of the spies. This week we read Parshas Chukas. The common perception is that from the point in the Biblical narration of Parshas Chukas, the sending out of the spies happened "just two weeks ago." In reality, 38 years transpired between the narrations of the two parshiyos. This is something we often fail to recognize. Parshas Chukas is discussing a totally new generation of Jews, since the entire generation (aged 20 - 60) of Jews from Parshas Shlach had already died. The last few Parshiyos of the Torah, from Chukas onward, all occur during the last year of the 40-year sojourn in the wilderness.

The beginning of the sojourn in the wilderness began with a song: "Then sang Moshe and the Children of Israel this song..." [Shmos 15:1]. The song recounts the miracles that happened to them at the beginning of the sojourn. Almost 40 years later, the sojourn in the wilderness is about to end, with another song. The Song of the Well recounts the miracles that happened to the Children of Israel at the end of their 40-year sojourn. We clearly have symmetry between the two songs. They even both begin with the same words: Az Yashir (Then sang). However there is one glaring difference. "Moshe and the Children of Israel" sang the first song. The Song of the Well was only sung by "Israel", not by Moshe.

The Rishonim mention this. They explain that Moshe's name was not mentioned in conjunction with the Song of the Well because the Well was a "sore spot" for Moshe. The Well was related to his sin at Mei Merivah, for which Moshe was denied entry into Eretz Yisroel. Therefore, it is better for Moshe not to be mentioned in connection with the Well.

The Shemen HaTov provides another reason for the omission of Moshe's name from this song. It was not to protect Moshe Rabbeinu. On the contrary, Moshe's name is omitted as the greatest "silent" testimony to the effectiveness of Moshe as a leader.

The greatest accomplishment that a leader can claim for himself is that he has left his people, and yet they are able to function on their own. A leader who has created a situation that without him, his nation does not know how they will be able to function, has not been totally effective. No one lives forever. There must be some kind of provision for what will be after the leader. The leader must light the candle so that the flame can then rise up and burn on its own.

At the beginning of the sojourn, the Jews were like children who needed to be held by the hand. Without the active participation of Moshe, they were lost. They grew and accomplished during those 40 years. They no longer needed Moshe to lead them in song praising the Almighty. They were spiritually mature enough to sing the song on their own.

In a certain sense, this is not only the job of a leader, this is the job of a parent as well. Truly effective parenting is creating a situation where parents instill in their children the capability to grow on their own. When a parent sees that his child is self-sufficient, that he has absorbed good character traits as his own -- then a parent can see that he has been effective. If even after they have grown up, the parent is still the one who has to remind them and prod them and push them, then to a certain extent the parent has not been fully successful.

The Torah is hinting to Moshe's success, by indicating that the Children of Israel were now capable of singing the Song of the Well, without help.

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #467, Detached Limbs and Tumah. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/>
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From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM PARSHA COLUMN [parshat_hashavua@ohrarahstone.org.il] June 23, 2004

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Hukat (Numbers 19:1-22:1)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Efrat, Israel

One of the most profound mysteries of the Torah is the law of the red heifer, a ritual by which an individual who has become ritually defiled by contact with a corpse is purified by a Kohen -- priest, who sprinkles him with a mixture of burnt ashes of a completely red heifer with water, into which must be thrust a piece of cedar wood, branches of hyssop and a scarlet thread of wool. (Numbers 19:1-6).

Not only are the various ingredients of this ritual difficult to fathom, appearing to be some kind of voodoo applied by Indian medicine men (G-d forbid!); the strangest aspect of all is the fact that while the impure person upon whom the ashes mixture is sprinkled emerges purified, those Kohen-priests involved in the carrying, the burning and the thrusting all become defiled. How can the very same object be a purifying agent and a defiling instrument at one and the same time? It is no wonder that our Talmudic Sages applied the words of King Solomon, wisest of all mortals, "I attempted to be wise, but it only moved further away from my understanding" (Kohelet 7:23), to the mystery of the red heifer.

Further, why does the Torah record this particular ritual here, at the conclusion of the desert sojourn of the Israelites? Rav Abraham Ibn Ezra explains that these laws were also given at Sinai, but were included in this context because the ritual must be prepared and performed by the Kohen-priests. But the rules of the Kohen-priests belong much more to the books of Exodus (the sanctuary portions of Terumah, Tetzaveh, Vayakhel and Pikudei) and Leviticus (the Holy Temple sacrificial cult) than to these stories of desert dissatisfaction, rebellion and intrigues in the book of Numbers. Why is the ritual of the red heifer sandwiched between the sins of the scouts and of Korah in the two previous portions and the transgression of Moses in the segment immediately following?

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik masterfully answered a significant part of our first query. To what may the ritual of the red heifer be compared? To a hapless individual who finds himself drowning in a quick-sand of mud. Certainly he must be rescued but the rescuer who must lift the victim up from the quagmire, will of necessity become soiled in the process. Hence, those who prepare the mixture of purification are themselves defiled by it!

My revered teacher went one step further. Is it then fair, he asked, that those who attempt to purify become themselves impure in this fashion? And he explained that if we understand that it is the religious leadership

which has the responsibility of purifying society, that had the priest-kohanim uplifted humanity to higher spiritual and ethical attainments, people would not have become contaminated by impurity in the first place, then it is only right that this same religious leadership take the risk of becoming defiled; when the nation as a whole is alienated from Torah and sanctity. The leaders must leave the ivory tower of the Bet-Midrash (Study Hall) and reach out to the masses of Jews wherever and in whatever state they may be. As G-d tells Moses, spiritually ensconced in the ethereal realms of the heavens receiving the Oral Law, "Go down, descend from your supernal heights, because your nation is acting perversely with the golden calf; if your nation is sinning, what do I need you for?!" (B.T. Berakhot 32a).

Indeed, religious leadership must assume responsibility for the defection of the masses of Jews, for the sorry state of Jewish morality and sanctity. The heifer or cow, usually a symbol of maternal concern, commitment and nourishment, is changed from the purity of white to the sinfulness of blood red in the detail of this ritual. Death, from the pristine and primordial period of the Garden of Eden, is the result of transgression, a punishment for straying beyond the proper boundaries of conduct set by G-d. The materialistic and hedonistic worship of the golden calf, the lazy and apathetic sin of the scouts in the desert, are all acts of impurity which lead – at the very least – to spiritual death. And this is the destiny of the desert generation.

Why did these freed and empowered slaves who refused to conquer the Promised Land, opt to remain in the desert? First and foremost, because they did not wish to assume responsibility. Indeed, their lives in the desert were virtually free of responsibility; food in the form of manna descended from heaven, divine rays of splendor provided them with shelter, and a "cloud by day, pillar of fire by night" told them when to journey and where to settle. They lived in a perennial "Kollel", free of worries and obligations.

Conquering Israel meant growing up, taking risks, suffering the dangers of welfare, assuming responsibility for their national destiny and mission to the world. Some thought they were on too high a spiritual level to get their feet dirty in the trenches (symbolized by the too proud cedar tree); others thought they were incapable of acting with such courage and strength in the face of the unknown (symbolized by the too-humble hyssop). Both groups are guilty of sin symbolized by the scarlet wool: the sin of the scouts and the sin of the silenced leadership of a frustrated and beaten –down Moses who failed to bring his people even to the portals of the Promised Land; the sin of too much pride and of too little courage! Moses who had courageously struck a threatening Egyptian task-master at the beginning of his career is now reduced to striking an inanimate rock in displaced anger against his complaining and rebelling nation. Comes the timeless message of the red-heifer to every Jewish leader in every generation: you must learn to assume the risks of responsibility!

The third day of Tammuz (this past Tuesday), mark the 10th anniversary of the passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l. In my eyes as well as in the eyes of countless others – many who like myself never became real Lubavitcher hassidim –he was truly the leader of this past generation. From the time that I made the decision to become the rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue at age 24 until and including my aliyah to Efrat and the establishment of the Ohr Torah Stone Institutions, I never made a significant move without seeking his sage advice. The one word which most characterizes his phenomenal style of leadership was his assumption of responsibility: he took responsibility for Jews all over the world, from Melbourne, Australia to Johannesburg, South Africa to Auckland, New Zealand to Kiryat Malachi, Israel. He inspired hundreds if not thousands of his disciples to become his emissaries in communities throughout the world, each one assuming a small share of the enormously heavy burden carried with such grace and faith by their revered Rebbe.

The Rebbe provided a magnificent addendum to the interpretation Rav Soloveitchik gave to the ritual of the Red Heifer. Yes, those who prepare the mixture of purification – the one who burns the heifer to make the ashes, the one who thrusts into the mixture the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet thread, the one who gathers up the various ingredients together and the one who carries them – all of these become defiled in their pursuit of purifying those who are impure. However, the one who actually sprinkles the mixture upon the individual defiled and thereby effectuates the actual purification, he himself remains pure. Hence the Rebbe made a promise to each of his shlichim (emissaries) all over the world – to those individuals who did the actual purifying themselves, the junior partners of the Rebbe who took responsibility to perform G-d's work of purification – these were guaranteed, they and their families, to remain pure, no matter how isolated they may be. It is through these emissaries that the Rebbe's legacy lives on.

Shabbat Shalom.

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation - Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From last year] Chukat

IT IS ONE OF THE MOST PERPLEXING, even disturbing, passages in the Torah. Moses the faithful shepherd, who has led the Israelites for forty years, is told that he will not live to cross the Jordan and enter the promised land.

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

The biblical text at this point is both lucidly clear and deeply obscure. The facts are not in doubt. Almost forty years have passed since the exodus. Most of the generation who remembered Egypt have died. So too had Miriam, Moses' sister. The people have arrived at Kadesh in the Zin desert, and they are now close to their destination. In their new encampment, however, they find themselves without water. They complain. "If only we had perished when our brothers perished in the presence of the Lord. Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die? Why did you take us up from Egypt to bring us to this vile place, where nothing grows, not corn or figs, not vines or pomegranates? There is not even any water to drink." 1 The tone of voice, the petulance, is all too familiar. The Israelites have hardly deviated from it throughout. Yet suddenly we experience not *deja-vu* but tragedy:

Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the congregation to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and fell on their faces. The glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "Take the staff, and then with Aaron your brother assemble all the community and, in front of them all, speak to the rock and it will yield water. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock, for them and their livestock to drink."

Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he had commanded him. Then he and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and said to them, "Listen to me, you rebels. Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?"

Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed forth in abundance, and they all drank, men and beasts.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not lead this assembly into the land which I promised to give them." 2 What had Moses done wrongly? What was his sin? What offence could warrant so great a punishment as not to be privileged to see the conclusion of the mission he had been set by G-d?

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

[1] Rashi, offering the simplest and best-known explanation, says that Moses' sin lay in striking the rock rather than speaking to it. Had Moses done as he was commanded, the people would have learned an unforgettable lesson: "If a rock, which neither speaks nor hears nor is in need of sustenance, obeys the word of G-d, how much more so should we." 3

[2] Rambam (Moses Maimonides) says that Moses' sin lay in his anger - his intemperate words to the people, "Listen to me, you rebels." To be sure, in anyone else, this would have been considered a minor offence. However, the greater the person, the more exacting are the standards G-d sets. Moses was not only a leader but the supreme role-model of the Israelites. Seeing his behaviour, the people may have concluded that anger is permissible - or even that G-d was angry with them, which He was not. 4

[3] Ramban (Nachmanides), following a suggestion of Rabbenu Chananel, says that the sin lay in saying, "Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?" - implying that what was at issue was human ability rather than Divine miracle and grace. 5

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

[5] Abarbanel makes the ingenious suggestion that Moses and Aaron were not punished for what they did at this point. Rather, their offences lay in the distant past. Aaron sinned by making the Golden Calf. Moses sinned in sending the spies. Those were the reasons they were not privileged to enter the land. To defend their honour, however, their sins are not made explicit in the biblical text. Their actions at the rock were the proximate rather than underlying cause (a hurricane may be the proximate cause of a bridge collapsing; the underlying cause, however, was a structural weakness in the bridge itself).

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

Difficulties, however remain. The first is that Moses himself attributed G-d's refusal to let him enter the land to His anger with the people, not just with himself: "At that time, I pleaded with the Lord, 'O Lord G-d, You have begun to show your servant your greatness and your strong hand . . . Let me cross over and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan, the fine hill country and the Lebanon.' But G-d was angry with me because of you . . ." 6 Similarly, Psalm 106: 32 states, "By the waters of Merivah they angered the Lord and trouble came to Moses because of them." 7

Second: however we identify Moses' sin, there is still a disproportion between it and its punishment. Because of Moses' prayers, G-d forgave

the Israelites. Could he not forgive Moses? To deprive him of seeing the culmination of a lifetime's efforts was surely unduly harsh. According to the Talmud, when the angels witnessed Rabbi Akiva's death, they said, "Is this the Torah, and this its reward?" 8 They might have asked the same question about Moses.

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

The people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses, saying, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." 10 It is with the deepest trepidation that one hazards a new explanation of so debated a text, but there may be a way of seeing the entire episode that ties the others together and makes sense of what otherwise seems like an impenetrable mystery.

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

What is the meaning of the verse, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam'? Did Adam have a book? Rather, it teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam (in advance), each generation and its interpreters, each generation and its sages, each generation and its leaders. 10 One of the most striking features of Judaism is that it is not centred on a single figure - a founder - who dominates its entire history. To the contrary, each age gave rise to its own leaders, and they were different from one another, not only in personality but in the type of leadership they exercised. First came the age of the patriarchs and matriarchs. Then came Moses and his disciple Joshua. They were followed by a succession of figures known generically as 'judges', though their role was more military than judicial. With Saul, monarchy was born - though even then, kings were not the only leaders; there were prophets and priests as well. With Ezra a new figure emerges: the 'scribe', the teacher as hero. Then came elders, sages, masters of halakhah and aggadah. During the Mishnaic period the leader of the Jewish people was known as Nasi (and later, in Babylon, as Resh Galutah or Exilarch). Chatam Sofer in one of his Responsa (Orach Chayyim, 12) notes that though the Nasi was a scholar, his role was as much political as educational and spiritual. 11 He was, in fact, a surrogate king. The Middle Ages saw the emergence of yet more new types: commentators, codifiers, philosophers and poets, alongside a richly varied range of leadership structures, some lay, some rabbinic, others a combination of both.

Leadership is a function of time. There is a famous dispute about Noah, whom the Torah describes as 'perfect in his generations'. According to one view, had Noah lived in a more righteous age, he would have been greater still. According to another, he would have been merely one of many. 12 The fact is that each generation yields the leadership appropriate to it. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 21b) says that Ezra was worthy of bringing the Torah to Israel, had Moses not preceded him. 13 In another passage (Menachot 29b) it says that Moses himself asked G-d to give the Torah through Rabbi Akiva rather than himself. 14 One can speculate endlessly about the might-have-beens of history, but we are each cast into the world at a time not of our choosing, and we have no choice but to live within its particular challenges and constraints. For that reason, we do not compare leaders - for there are no timeless standards by which to judge them. "Jerubal in his generation was like Moses in his generation; Bedan in his generation was like Aaron in his

generation; Jephthah in his generation was like Samuel in his generation." 15

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

The remarkable fact about Moses and the rock is the way he observes precedent. Almost forty years earlier, in similar circumstances, G-d had told him to take his staff and strike the rock. Now too, G-d told him to take his staff. Evidently Moses inferred that he was being told to act this time as he had before, which is what he does. He strikes the rock. What he failed to understand was that time had changed in one essential detail. He was facing a new generation. The people he confronted the first time were those who had spent much of their lives as slaves in Egypt. Those he now faced were born in freedom in the wilderness.

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

Moses' inability to hear this distinction was not a failing, still less was it a sin. It was an inescapable consequence of the fact that he was mortal. A figure capable of leading slaves to freedom is not the same as one able to lead free human beings from a nomadic existence in the wilderness to the conquest and settlement of a land. These are different challenges, and they need different types of leadership. Indeed the whole biblical story of how a short journey took forty years teaches us just this truth. Great change does not take place overnight. It takes more than one generation - and therefore more than one type of leader. Moses could not become a Joshua, just as Joshua could not be another Moses. The fact that at a moment of crisis Moses reverted to an act that had been appropriate forty years before showed that time had come for the leadership to be handed on to a new generation. It is a sign of his greatness that Moses, too, recognised this fact and took the initiative in asking G-d (in Bemidbar ch. 27) to appoint a successor.

If this interpretation is correct, then Moses did not sin, nor was he punished. To be sure, the Torah uses language expressive of sin ("You did not believe in Me", "You rebelled against Me", "You trespassed against Me", "You did not sanctify Me"). But these phrases may refer, as several commentators suggest (see the tenth interpretation cited by Abarbanel, and the commentary of Luzzatto) not to Moses and Aaron but to the people and the incident as a whole. That would explain why Moses said that "G-d was angry with me because of you".

The fact that Moses was not destined to enter the promised land was not a punishment but the very condition of his (and our) mortality. It is also clear why this episode occurs in the sedra of Chukkat, which begins with the rite of the Red Heifer and purification from contact with death. We also understand why it follows on the death of Miriam, Moses and

Aaron's sister. Law and narrative are here intricately interwoven in a set of variations on the inevitability of death and the continuity of life. For each of us, there is a Jordan we will not cross, however long we live, however far we travel. "It is not for you to complete the task," said Rabbi Tarfon, "but neither are you free to disengage from it." 16 But this is not inherently tragic. What we begin, others will complete - if we have taught them how.

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

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

From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2004 6:46 PM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Chukas

WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5764

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav
SHABBOS CANDLES: QUESTIONS and ANSWERS: Part 2

QUESTION: Once they are lit, may the Shabbos candles be moved [by one who has not yet "accepted" the Shabbos] from one spot on the table or in the room to another?

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, no. The candles should remain where they were lit and not be moved from place to place, even within the same room. It is, therefore, incorrect to light candles in the Succah and then bring them into the house before the meal is served. But b'diavad, if there is a compelling reason to move the candles to another place in the same room, (1) they may be moved.(2)

[There are poskim who maintain that once Shabbos candles have been lit they should not be moved(3) at all [even by those who did not yet "accept" the Shabbos] even if they will be returned to the same place.(4) Other poskim, however, do not consider this to be an issue,(5) and the custom seems to follow the more lenient opinion.(6) Still, unless there is a pressing need, the candles should not be moved at all in deference to the more stringent opinions.(7)]

QUESTION: Is it permitted to light one candle from another?

DISCUSSION: Yes, it is permitted. While it is not permitted to use a lit Shabbos candle to ignite a match or to melt the bottom of another candle so that it should adhere to the candlestick, it is permitted to use a lit candle to light another candle.(8) The best way to do this is to pick up the unlit candle, light it, and then put that candle back into its candlestick.(9)

QUESTION: Is it preferable to kindle the Shabbos lights with olive oil rather than with wax candles?

DISCUSSION: Many early sources speak about olive oil as being the preferred medium for the Shabbos lights,(10) as the flame that it produces is the clearest and the purest. On Shabbos, when we want to avoid anything that could lead to tampering with the wicks or adjusting

the light source, the Sages preferred the use of olive oil because the light it casts is superior to that of other oils. Nowadays, however, when wax candles cast as good - or even better - a light as olive oil, there is no advantage in using olive oil rather than candles.(11)

QUESTION: What should a lady do if, after kindling the candles, a gust of wind blows them out, or they tip over and are extinguished?

DISCUSSION: That depends on the particulars:

1. If some or all of the candles blow out before the lady recites the blessing over them, she should relight the candles and recite the blessing.(12)

2. If some or all of the candles blow out after the blessing is recited, she should instruct a household member who did not yet "accept" the Shabbos to rekindle the candles on her behalf.(13) No blessing is recited over the second lighting.

3. If there are no household members available to can kindle the lights for her, or if the candles blow out after sunset (or even before sunset but after Shabbos has begun for the entire community), she should do nothing.(14) If, however, she will be distressed or even merely upset about not having lit candles for Shabbos, she may instruct a non-Jew to relight the candles on her behalf.(15)

QUESTION: How has electrical lighting affected the traditional way of lighting Shabbos candles?

DISCUSSION: The universal use of electric lights has had a twofold effect on the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. On the one hand, it has made it easier to perform. On the other hand, it has introduced several halachic questions explain:

At the time that electricity became commonplace, the poskim debated whether the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles could be fulfilled by turning on electric lights. There were three different opinions: 1) It is permissible to use electricity for Shabbos candles and the proper blessing may be recited(16); 2) It is not proper to use electric lights for this mitzvah(17); 3) It is permissible to use electrical lights, but the blessing should not be recited over them.(18) Since there is no final and definitive ruling on this issue, we must look at the prevailing custom, which - upon reflection - is a compromise among the three views:

Although the blessing is recited over the traditional candles or oil-based lights that are lit in the area where the Friday night meal will be eaten, we nevertheless rely on electricity for the other part of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The halachah clearly states that one is obligated to have light in any room that will be used on Friday night. (19) Our Sages instituted this so that household members would be able to safely navigate in the house without fear of injury that would disrupt the harmony of Shabbos. Today, most homes rely on some electrical source (night-light, bathroom-light, etc.) to illuminate the areas in which they will find themselves on Friday night. Thus, they fulfill this part of the mitzvah.(20)

The appropriate procedure, then, is as follows. When the wife is ready to light candles in the dining room, all the electrical lights which will be used on Friday night should be shut off. The lights which are going to be used on Shabbos should then be turned on, with the intention that they are being turned on for the sake of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The candles should then be lit and the blessing recited over all the lights in the house, both electrical and otherwise. In this manner, one fulfills the mitzvah according to all views.

In a situation where using candles would be difficult or dangerous, such as in a hospital, the poskim agree that one should rely on the electric lights for Shabbos candles. They should be turned off and then turned on again for the sake of the mitzvah.(21) Whether a blessing is recited depends on views 1 and 3 quoted above.(22) No clear-cut custom exists and one should follow his rav's directives.

Students residing in a dormitory or guests staying at a hotel are obligated to light Shabbos candles. Even if they light candles in the

dining hall, they are still required to light in the area where they sleep. Since it is considered unsafe, however, to allow candles to burn in a dormitory or in a hotel room, we must rely on the electric lights to fulfill that part of the mitzvah. A small light should, therefore, be turned off and on in honor of Shabbos before the arrival of the Shabbos. A blessing, however, should not be made, since the blessing is recited over the candles which are lit in the main dining room.

Shabbos guests staying at another person's home can technically fulfill the mitzvah through the lighting of their hosts. Even though they do not need to light a special candle of their own, it has nevertheless become customary that all married women light their own candles. Since the guests are required to have some light in their sleeping area, however, the proper procedure for them is as follows: Light an electric light in or near their sleeping quarters, proceed quickly to the dining room and light candles, and allow the blessing to apply to both acts of lighting.(23)

An additional issue concerning electricity and Shabbos candles is the concern of some poskim(24) whether it is permitted to light candles with a blessing when the electric lights are on, since in reality one is not adding any light to the room. Although some poskim defend our practice, (25) it is best to shut off the lights in the room before the candles are lit. They should then be turned on by the husband after the candles have been lit by the wife but before she recites the blessing.(26) Alternatively, the wife can do both, but she must turn the lights on first and then light the candles.(27)

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FOOTNOTES: 1 Or to another room (in the same house) which is being used on Friday night. See Chovas ha-dar, Neiros Shabbos, 2. 2 Mishnah Berurah 263:4. See also Kinyan Torah 4:26, who opines that nowadays, when it is obvious that the candles were lit in honor of Shabbos, it is permitted to move them. 3 And, according to some opinions, even touched; see Beur Halachah 263:14 (s.v. liga). 4 O.C. 263:14, as explained by Magen Avraham, Derech ha-Chayim and Pri Megadim, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 263:57, who agrees, except when moving the candles is needed for the sake of performing a mitzvah. 5 Chayei Adam and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch do not mention this prohibition at all. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:25 who rejects this stringency. 6 Tehillah l'David 263:12 7 Minchas Shabbos 75:27. 8 Mishnah Berurah 263:4. 9 To satisfy the opinion mentioned earlier that once lit, Shabbos candles should not be moved. 10 See Tosfos, Shabbos 23a (s.v. mereish), Sefer Chasidim 272, and Ma'asei Rav quoting the custom of the Gaon of Vilna. 11 Mishnah Berurah 264:23. See Az Nidberu 3:4. 12 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 4, note 183). 13 O.C. 263:17. 14 She would not be required to add an additional candle in subsequent weeks, since her failure to light candles was no her fault. 15 Based on Beur Halachah 263:1 (s.v. lehadlik). 16 Teshuvos Beis Yitzchak Y.D. 120; Machaze Avraham 41; Melamed Leho'il 47; Harav Y.Y. Henkin (Eidus l'Yisrael, pg. 122). 17 Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai O.C. 3:59; Maharshag 2:107; Pekudas Elazer 22; Tchebiner Rav (quoted in Shraga ha-Meir 5:11). 18 Har Tzvi 2:114 quoting the Rogatchover Gaon; Mishpatei Uziel O.C. 1:7; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, 2, note 26); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43 note 22) maintains that a blessing could be made over a flashlight but not over other lights. 19 Mishnah Berurah 263:2,29,31. 20 Harav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14 and pg. 36). 21 Rama O.C. 263:4 concerning candles; Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:157) concerning electricity. 22 Harav A. Kotler (quoted in Kochvei Yitzchak 1:2) ruled that a woman who gave birth in the hospital may light electric candles with a blessing. Harav M. Feinstein (ibid.) rules that no blessing should be recited. 23 Harav Y. Kamenetsky recommended this procedure for hotel guests as well; Emes L'yaakov O.C. 263, note 274. 24 Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-30; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 166 and 171); Az Nidberu 1:79; 3:12. 25 See responsum of Harav Y. Halberstam (Kloizenberger Rebbe) in Pnei Shabbos 263, and addendum to Shulchan Shelomo, vol. 1, pg. 20. 26 Custom at the home of Harav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes L'yaakov, O.C. 263, note 274). Harav S.Z. Auerbach (after his wife's passing) turned off the lights, lit the candles and then turned on the lights, so that the blessing is said on both sources of energy (reported by his grandson in Kol ha-Torah, vol. 40, pg. 16). 27 Custom at the home of Harav M. Feinstein (The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 20). Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author,

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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2004 4:39 PM
PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY
RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

- Parshas Chukas This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent. (19:14) In the Talmud Berachos 63b, Chazal interpret this pasuk homiletically. "Reish Lakish says the words of Torah endure only for one who kills himself for it, as it says, 'This is the Torah/teaching (regarding) a man who would die in a tent.' The commentators, each in his own individual approach, suggest varied explanations for the meaning of Chazal's statement. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explains that Chazal are intimating that one must be meticulous about his time and how he spends it. Every free moment should be dedicated to Torah study. He gives the following analogy. A wealthy businessman, who would spend the greater part of his waking hours immersed in business activity, finally came to the realization that he was literally wasting his time. His davening was no longer a spiritual experience. He ran into shul and ran out - during those days that he even made time to attend. Torah study was a thing of the past. The years had gone by, and he now realized that before long he would have to give a reckoning to the Heavenly Tribunal about how he had spent his days in this world. He decided that from now on, he would change his seder hayom, daily schedule.

The next day, he did not rush through his davening. Afterwards, he sat and learned for two hours. When he arrived at the business three hours late, his wife questioned his tardiness. He made up an excuse, because he was not yet ready for an altercation. This continued for a number of weeks. He was running out of excuses, and his wife was tiring of being alone in the store. One day, her patience ran out, and she decided to search the city to find out what he was doing during his precious time. When she discovered her husband in the bais hamedrash, immersed in the sea of Talmud, she became upset.

"Why are you studying Torah at a time when the store is filled with customers? Where is your sense of achrayos, responsibility, to the community?" she asked, quite upset.

The husband calmly looked into his wife's eyes and replied, "My dear, what would you do if one day the angel of death paid me a visit and took me from this world? Would you tell him that the store is filled with customers? You know you cannot argue with death. You would 'give zich an eitzah,' you would find a way around the problem. Therefore, make believe that every day I die for a few hours and will be resurrected after I complete my daily seder, schedule, of learning."

The Chafetz Chaim explains that every individual should view himself as "dead" and, thus, whatever excuses he might have had not to study Torah will no longer be available to him. Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, supplements this thought. Imagine, says Rav Chaim, that one day Hashem would allow all those who have passed away from this world to leave their graves for one hour and during that hour they would be allowed to do whatever they want. Once word would get out in this world, everybody would rush to the cemetery to greet their long-lost relatives and friends to spend that special hour with them. We can imagine the surprise and shock on everyone's faces when, as soon as the graves opened up, the deceased all ran to the bais hamedrash to study Torah for an hour. They would not have time for anything else! This is the meaning of what Chazal are telling us. The Torah endures only by he who views the time allotted to him in this world as a special gift, as if he

was rising from the dead for a short while, and he has to make effective use of every second.

The gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders of each generation, viewed killing oneself for the study of Torah as an imperative to study Torah under hardship and without the usual comforts that so many of us seek. The enjoyment should be derived from the Torah study itself, not the embellishments that one creates, so that the learning will conform to his comfort zone. In the preface to the Biur Ha'Gra on Shulchan Aruch, the Gaon M'Vilna's sons relate the incredible level of perishus - abstinence from the pleasures of this world - and piety which their father achieved. From the moment he reached the age of Bar-Mitzvah, he never looked outside his four cubits. He ate a piece of stale bread soaked in water twice-a-day as his meals. Furthermore, he did not chew this bread, instead he swallowed it whole. He never slept more than two hours in the course of a 24-hour day. This was divided into four half-hour segments. During the half-hour "nap" his mouth would constantly be reviewing passages from the Talmud or Midrash. Three half-hours at night and one-half hour during the day was the extent of his daily sleep.

Horav Mendel Kaplan, zl, would say that Hashem counts the pain we suffer on His computer. The Midrash says that if someone toils in Torah until he needs his last bit of strength to drop onto his bed and fall asleep, then, when saliva begins to drip from his mouth, Hashem cherishes it like the incense offering in the Bais HaMikdash.

There is another form of killing oneself for Torah: overcoming difficulties in learning. There are students who have to struggle to understand the subject matter. For some, this causes humiliation and precludes success in learning. Rav Mendel would extol the qualities of one who was not discouraged by failure nor afraid to make mistakes. The humiliation should not be a deterrent in his quest for achievement in Torah knowledge. He would say that one who is injured in battle - or, in contemporary society, in a sporting event - will wear his bandage as a badge of honor. Similarly, when someone falls while trying to learn, it is to his credit. He would encourage his talmidim, students, "Do not be afraid to make mistakes. One does not succeed from getting honors - only from humiliation. You should act in shiur like you do on the basketball court. Do not be afraid to shoot the ball because you might miss. You have to accept embarrassment for Torah. By nature, honor feels good and it might even make you feel stronger, but it is a segulah, talisman, to humiliate yourself for Torah. When you prepare something to say over in a chaburah, group, you must struggle over Torah and may well end up embarrassing yourself; it is a big business proposition in which the rewards are very great."

This is the teaching/Torah regarding a man who would die in a tent. (19:14)

The Chida cites the Panim Meiros who gives the following interpretation for this pasuk. "This is the Torah" - this is one of the unique qualities of the Torah; a man who would die - even if a person were to die; in a tent - he still remains in the tent of Torah." Since his Torah thoughts are being related to others, it is considered as if his lips are speaking from the grave. The Chida adds that this applies to everyone whose name is mentioned; even if a number of citations are made from one who heard from another, who heard from the original source, they all receive the merit of having their lips speak from the grave. The Ben Ish Chai cites the Maharsha who posits that one can be mechayeh miesim, resurrect the dead, even in contemporary times. How? When one cites divrei Torah, words of Torah, from the deceased, he causes his lips to speak from the grave, thereby creating a vehicle through which the deceased momentarily lives on. Horav Chaim Palagi, zl, writes that if the Torah thoughts of a deceased are cited in his name, his neshamah, soul, is transported from its Heavenly abode to the place where his Torah thoughts are being cited.

A Heavenly angel once appeared to the Bais Yosef and said, "Last night you analyzed and correctly interpreted the words of the Rambam. The Rambam was so pleased that he said that when you pass from this world, he will come, greet and escort you to your place in Gan Eden."

The Maginei Shlomo was written for the purpose of resolving the difficult passages in Rashi which the Baalei Tosfos dispute and question. In the preface to the sefer, written by his grandson it is related that the author once commented to his students that Rashi had appeared to him in a dream and said, "Because you trouble yourself to save me from the powerful and brilliant lions of Torah, the Baalei Tosfos, I, together with my students, will come greet you in Olam Habah, the World To Come." On the day of the Maginei Shlomo's petirah, passing, approximately one half-hour before his soul left its earthly abode, he lay in bed surrounded by a group of Torah scholars. He looked up and said, "Make room for the light of Yisrael, Rabbeinu Shlomo Yitzchaki, Rashi, who has arrived with his entourage to accompany me on my journey to the next world. I stood by his side throughout the years to rejoin and elucidate his commentary from the challenges posed by the Baalei Tosfos and now he is compensating me."

In his preface to the Mekor Baruch, Horav Nachum Ginzberg, zl, writes that he had once met Horav Meir Simchah, zl, m'Dvinsk, the Ohr Sameach, who appeared overjoyed, with his face lit up. Rav Meir Simchah related that earlier that day he had the zchus, merit, to develop a brilliant novellae which he felt was I'amitah shel Torah, coincided with the truthful essence of the Torah. Shortly thereafter, he dozed off and dreamt that he was witness to an assembly in Heaven attended by the greatest Torah luminaries. They were lamenting the fact that in the material world there was no one who was writing Torah thoughts and novellae that correlated with the Divine Truth. Suddenly, the Rashba arose and declared that in the city of Dvinsk, there is a rav who is more successful than he had been in concurring his novellae with the Divine Truth. The Rashba was referring to a question he had on a passage in the Talmud which led him subsequently to posit that the text was in error and should be erased. The Ohr Sameach, however, was able to explicate the passage brilliantly.

Horav Chaim Palagi, zl, writes that one who contributes toward the publishing of a sefer will eventually sit next to the author in Gan Eden. It was his contribution that enabled the lips of the author to speak from the grave. He, therefore, shares in the reward.

Sponsored in memory of our dear Mother and Grandmother GIZI WEISS Morry & Judy Weiss, Erwin & Myra Weiss, and Grandchildren Gary & Hildee Weiss, Jeff & Karen Weiss Zev & Rachel Weiss, Elie & Sara Weiss, and Brian "Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy"

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From: JONATHAN ROSENBLUM
jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org Sent: June 10, 2004
Subject: FW: Mishpacha article

"Are Gadol Biographies Good for Us?" Revisited
Well over a decade ago, I wrote a piece entitled "Are Gadol Biographies Good for Us?" Little did I know at the time that I would soon embark on a new career writing such biographies. Lesson number one: Be careful about what you write, it may come back to haunt you. My new career led me, perforce, to give an affirmative answer to my own

question: At least some gadol biographies are good for us. For sure, the biographies are beneficial to the author who spends years immersed in a life exemplifying all that a human being can be.

Nevertheless some of my original misgivings about the genre remain. One of those concerns was that too many such biographies dwell at great length on the subject's distinguished yichus and demonstrations of his early genius. The effect is to make his subsequent greatness seem like something almost predestined. Readers who do not share such an illustrious lineage and are not prodigies will feel themselves

thereby exempted from any obligation to become a gadol b'Torah. In a famous letter, HaRav Yitzchak Hutner, Rosh Yeshivas Chaim Berlin, rails against the mistaken impression that gedolim "came out from under the hand of their Creator, in all their fullness and glory." Such a portrayal not only diminishes the stature of the gadol in question by downplaying the extent of his efforts and struggles, but it deprives his life of much of its instructive value.

As Rav Hutner writes, "When we speak of a gadol, we speak of the finished product. But who knows how much struggle went into achieving that state, or how many challenges there were along the path? And when we fail to recognize this fact, and compare ourselves to the stories we read of the perfection of our gedolim, we come to despair..." I've since added another concern to those mentioned in my first essay: Too many gadol biographies can make Jewish history seem as if it were exclusively the history of great rabbinic leaders. The myth that everything positive in Jewish history has come about only through the agency of our rabbinic leaders can stifle the vast resources of initiative from below that have also played a critical role in Jewish life.

When we see anything in our community in need of correction, the easiest response is to free ourselves of responsibility with the claim: Surely, if I see this as a problem, then so do others far greater than I, and, if so, they will take care of the problem. Or alternatively, if our leaders are not doing anything, my perception that there is a problem must be wrong.

The approach of my teachers, however, was the opposite. They taught me that there is always an element of Hashgacha in the fact that we are distressed by a particular situation. That we seem to be more troubled than others may well be an indication that it is our portion to help find the solution. Of course, before undertaking any major project, especially with implications for a large public, we must seek the guidance of leading Torah authorities. But the fact that they are the "eyes of the generation" does not mean that they are responsible for every positive initiative.

Two well-known historical examples bring out the point I'm trying to make, but each of us could cite dozens of others. The classic example of a massive transformation in chareidi life where the initiative came from below is the Bais Yaakov movement founded by Sarah Shenirer.

Bais Yaakov was arguably the most important innovation of the last century, saving a generation of young women in Eastern Europe who were being educated in gymnasia and lost to the frum world. It ensured that there would be young women eager to marry aspiring Torah scholars. Sarah Shenirer's students spread the movement to the four corners of the globe. Without Bais Yaakov, the phenomenal rebirth of Torah learning from the ashes of Europe would have been inconceivable.

Sarah Shenirer could have easily told herself that her concern about lost Jewish daughters was mistaken: "Who am I, a simple seamstress, to worry about this? If the gedolim aren't doing anything, there must not be a problem." Without the blessing of the Belzer Rebbe, Sarah Shenirer would never have opened her Seminary, and without the subsequent approbations of the Chofetz Chaim and the Gerrer Rebbe, Bais Yaakov, which was a radical break with women's education as it had been known for centuries, could never have spread so rapidly through Poland and Lithuania. But without the initiative of a simple seamstress, the movement would never have come into existence.

Reb Yosef Rosenberger single-handedly introduced shatnez-checking to America, and from America to the rest of the world. Shortly after his arrival as a new immigrant from Vienna, another new immigrant, who knew that Rosenberger's parents had been clothiers, asked him how he could know whether there was shatnez in clothes in America. Rosenberger soon discovered there was no way to know. Rather than telling himself that it was not his business to get involved if many great talmidei chachamim who had preceded him to America were doing nothing, Rosenberger made educating the public about the prohibition of shatnez and the development of a low-cost, reliable test for shatnez his life mission. He lived for years as the last remaining immigrant at the 616 Bedford Ave. headquarters of Zeirei Agudath Israel, foregoing even the possibility of marriage, to prevent a Torah mitzvah from being forgotten. The greatness of Sarah Shenirer and Yosef Rosenberger was not that they saw a problem, but that they devoted themselves to rectifying it. Alongside the biographies of our great Torah leaders, we also need to tell the stories of all those unsung heroes, blessed with neither remarkable talents nor position, who nevertheless substantially improved the lives of thousands of their fellow Jews because they were willing to make themselves into meshugoyim l'davar echad.