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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON CHUKAS - 5775

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Parshas Chukas

### **Parshas Chukas**

#### **Living With Questions**

This is the decree of the Torah...take a completely red cow...

Be'er Yosef: Parah adumah, the red heifer, is the quintessential example of a chok, of a mitzvah that we cannot understand. We accept it for no other reason than our readiness to listen to Hashem's edicts, comprehensible or not. We are told that Shlomo, the wisest of men, attempted to fathom the meaning of this mitzvah, and found it elusive.

On the other hand, we find statements in Chazal that Moshe was granted understanding of this mitzvah, and that in the Messianic future, the reason would be revealed to all. Chazal clearly believed that the arguments in support of the parah adumah are not beyond human comprehension. We should wonder, therefore, why the reasoning behind this mitzvah is withheld from people between Moshe and the final redemption.

We suggest that HKBH has an extremely practical objective in keeping the reasoning behind the parah hidden from the vast majority of mankind. Parah adumah offers people a wonderful exercise in living with questions for which answers are not available. Life – Torah life in particular – presents us with much that is difficult to comprehend. As humans, we can never fully comprehend the ways of Hashem. When people ponder certain issues like theodicy, unanswered questions sometimes lead people to doubt Hashem's ways and His justice. (Even Moshe found himself troubled by such questions. According to Chazal[2] when Moshe asked to see G-d's "front" he specifically meant aspects of Hashem's conduct towards the world, including righteous people living tragic lives, and evildoers who enjoy prosperity and tranquility.)

The antidote to the toxic power of unanswered questions is parah adumah. Practicing its precepts trains people to do what they are commanded despite carrying the burden of deep-seated questions. Parah adumah can be seen as a vital practice exercise in the art of living with questions.

It is a particularly well-chosen exercise. Until such time as Moshiach ushers in a new kind of world, we will all witness death. There will be lots of

it to go around, and no end in sight to the occasions that will call for the use of parah adumah ashes to purify people and utensils that have come into contact with death. Virtually everyone will have to grapple with the enigma of a parah adumah that purifies the impure, and paradoxically defiles the pure. They will learn – by doing – that people can live with questions, and continue to remain committed to halachah.

The gemara juxtaposes two stories about Moshe and R. Akiva. In the first, Moshe becomes distraught while listening in on a shiur by R Akiva in the future, which He (Moshe) cannot follow. Hashem reassures him by having Moshe continue to watch as R Akiva is challenged on a crucial point, and can only defend his position by claiming that it is a teaching going back to Moshe himself. In the second episode, Moshe argues that perhaps R Akiva ought to be the one who presents Torah to the people rather than Moshe himself. Once again, Hashem shows Moshe a different scene, in which R Akiva dies through excruciating torture, and his flesh is sold in the marketplace. Incredulous that such a fate befall such a holy person, Moshe is silenced with, "So it has formed in my thought to do."

The connection between the two stories is tight and organic. The upshot of both is that there is much that we cannot understand as mortal, limited human beings. Indeed, we will sometimes observe things that shake us to the core, such as the treatment of R Akiva. Moshe is told that this is simply the way things need to be. Humans cannot comprehend the Divine plan. Yet Hashem does not expect Moshe to accept this argument without some prior help. He therefore shows Moshe a class of the future, in which a great R Akiva is able to discern great wisdom from the Torah, utilizing even the crowns of certain letters. Yet this same R. Akiva is forced on occasion to concede that he does not fathom a particular point, and must accept it simply as the Divine Will communicated to Moshe. This exercise makes it easier for him to understand that he will not be able to comprehend the rules of Hashem's justice, and will at times have to accept situations as part of an inscrutable Divine plan. For us, the exercise is parah adumah.

Magen Avraham[3] notes a custom to fast the Friday of Parshas Chukas in remembrance of the great tragedy of the burning of twenty cartloads of gemara manuscript scrolls in Paris. Through special communication from the Beyond, we learned that the fast should not follow the calendar date of the event, but always be observed on the day before the reading of our parshah. Why is this so? We always follow calendar dates.

We can offer the same kind of explanation. A tragedy of this sort can punch holes in a person's emunah. The antidote again is the lesson of parah adumah: learning to live with unanswered questions.

Ramban asks why Aharon was bypassed in the very holy work of preparing the first parah adumah in favor of his son Elazar. Why wasn't Aharon accorded this honor? Ramban offers two reasons, but we can add a third. During the great celebration of the inauguration of the Mishkan, Aharon sustained a terrible loss as two of his sons were struck down. It was hard for people to understand why Hashem would spoil his party by injecting this dissonant note. The loss was greatest to Aharon as father of the two victims. Nonetheless, Aharon accepted the Divine edict in silence. He did not second-guess HKBH; his only reaction was one of self-criticism for his own sins possibly having contributed to the tragedy.[4] Thus, when the Bnei Yisroel were given the mitzvah of parah adumah to help them accept the paradoxes of life and not resent the ways of Divine Providence, Aharon was left on the sidelines. This mitzvah was not for him; he had already mastered its message.

We now understand as well why the cloud of darkness hovering over this mitzvah will be lifted in the messianic future. Chazal[5] tell us that the reasoning behind the parah adumah will be made available at that time. According to our approach, there will no further reason to keep the reason hidden! The gemara[6] contrasts our present state of affairs with that of the future. At the moment, we make different berachos on hearing good news and bad; in the future, all news will be met with the berachah that we now reserve for good news alone. Although we believe that everything Hashem

does is for the better, we cannot honestly recite a berachah today for what we perceive as tragedy as if we were able to recognize the good in it. This will change in the future, when we will have enough clarity about Hashem's ways that we will see the good clearly.

When that happens, there will be no more need to have parah adumah teach us how to live with questions. We will have all the answers. Parah adumah's secret can then be revealed.

[1] Based on Be'er Yosef, Bamidbar 19:2 [2] Berachos 7A [3] Orach Chaim 580 [4] Sifra [5] Bamidbar Rabbah 19:6 [6] Pesachim 50A  
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Weekly Torah Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald  
Chukat 5775-2015

### "Accepting the Inscrutable"

by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this week's parasha, parashat Chukat, we learn of the statute of the Red Cow, also known as the Red Heifer. The ashes of an unblemished, totally red heifer, that had never worked, were mixed with the holy waters, and the combined mixture was used to sprinkle on those Israelites who had become impure as a result of coming in contact with death. After being sprinkled on the third and seventh day, those who were impure immersed in a mikveh, and were rendered clean once again.

The law of the Red Heifer is known in Hebrew as a חוק, -- "Chok," a statute that is beyond human understanding. The Torah clearly states as much in Numbers 19:2, וְזֶה חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לְאֱמֹר, This is the decree of the Torah which G-d has commanded.

Rashi quoting the Midrash Tanchuma 7-8, explains that the law of the Red Heifer is regarded as the quintessential Chok --decree-of the Torah. Because of the law's seeming irrationality, Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, by saying, "What is the purpose of this commandment?"

By categorizing the law as a "Chok," the Torah declares that the law of the Red Heifer is the decree of One Who gave the Torah, and, therefore, it is not for anyone to question. In other words, no rationale is given for this mitzvah, and because it is inscrutable, one may not ever question its validity.

Perhaps the greatest paradox of the Red Heifer is that its waters purify those who are contaminated, and contaminate those who are pure.

The Red Heifer and its irrationality is but a paradigm of much of life.

Despite the significant efforts that we invest in trying to find the reason and the rationale behind all that we do and everything that happens, there are many things in life that are simply beyond human comprehension.

One of the major issues in Jewish life is the irrational nature of the anti-Semitism that is constantly directed toward the Jews. This anti-Semitism has led to totally irrational attacks on Jews throughout the ages. To underscore how pervasive anti-Semitism has been in Jewish history, there was even a special fast day declared many centuries ago, that is indirectly related to parashat Chukat.

The major commentator on the Code of Jewish Law, the Magen Avraham commenting on Orach Chaim 580, states that in Paris, in the Hebrew year 5004, corresponding to the date of June 17, 1244, a decree was issued by a commission of Catholic theologians, to burn cartloads of the Hebrew Talmud. This tragic burning of 24 wagonloads of the precious and irreplaceable books of the Talmud took place on the Friday prior to the reading of parashat Chukat.

According to tradition, the great sages of that time were deeply troubled by this calamity, and in a dream received a Heavenly reply that pronounced three Aramaic words, דָּבָר צְרוּרָה אֲוִירָתָא. These words are the Aramaic translation of the second verse of parashat Chukat, וְזֶה חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה, which translates as,

"This is a decree of the Torah." This vision was taken to mean that it had already been predetermined that on the week prior to the reading of the Torah portion of Chukat, this tragedy would occur. Therefore, the sages decreed that the fast should not be observed on a particular day of the month, like other fasts, but instead every year, on the Friday prior to the reading of parashat Chukat.

Around the year 1240, an apostate Parisian Jew, named Nicholas Donin, convinced King Louis IX of France that he would be able to prove the truth of Christianity through the Talmud. If Donin would successfully prove his contention, all the Jews would have to convert to Christianity.

The Chief Rabbi, and head of the Yeshiva of Paris, Rabbeinu Yechiel who is mentioned many times in the Talmudic commentary known as Tosafot, was charged to head the team of four rabbis who would debate Donin.

Unfortunately, the deck was stacked against Rabbeinu Yechiel and his three cohorts, since without the ability to speak openly they were unable to say anything critical about the church or Christianity, rendering the debate futile. Through their skillful debating and their brilliant defense of the Talmud, Rabbeinu Yechiel and the other Jewish scholars were still able to convince the king that it was impossible to prove the efficacy of Christianity through the Talmud. The king, however, felt that the contents of the Talmud were insulting to Christianity, and in 1242, he recommended to the commission of Catholic theologians, that all existing copies of the Talmud be collected and destroyed. It must be underscored that this was about two hundred years before the printing press and that the volumes of Talmud that were destroyed were handwritten on parchments using quill pens. It is estimated that the 24 cartloads contained about 12,000 volumes of priceless Hebrew manuscripts. Despite the valiant defense of the Talmud by Rabbeinu Yechiel, the king proceeded to confiscate all the money and property of the Jewish community and expel the Jews from France. This same King Louis IX was canonized by the church as a saint in 1297. The American city, Saint Louis is named after him, as is the Saint Louis Cardinals baseball team.

There is a poignant and controversial postscript to the story. It is well-known that certain elements of the Jewish community in the 12th and 13th centuries were not happy with the works of Maimonides and were especially displeased with his מִנְיַח בְּיָסוּדִים, the Guide to the Perplexed, which was based on Aristotelean philosophy and considered by some to contain heresy.

The great sage, Rabbeinu Yona of Gerondi and his followers declared war on the Guide and even reported the "heretical works" to the Christian authorities who publicly collected and burnt all the confiscated copies of the Guide to the Perplexed.

There are those who theorize, although it is impossible to prove, that the payback for burning Maimonides' works was the confiscation and destruction of all the books of the Talmud from the Jewish community.

Hence, the fast that was declared on the Friday before parashat Chukat is not only because of the great destruction and expulsion that took place among French Jewry, but is also a reflection of the unnecessary enmity and the unwarranted jealousy that abounded in the Jewish community in those days. These attitudes led to the tragic destruction and expulsion.

It is reported that as a result of the burning of the Talmud, Rabbeinu Yonah acknowledged his error, renounced his former opposition to the works of Maimonides, and begged forgiveness for his actions.

The Al-mighty's ways are often inscrutable. Try as we may to understand them, we often fail to see the Divine logic. It is important to know when to yield and simply accept the limits of the mortal mind and human understanding.

May you be blessed.

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## **Kidney Donations: A Halachic Update**

**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman**

**This article is written for the Refuah Shleimah of Aryeh Eliezer Ben Gitel and his Wife Sara Devorah Bas Miriam – a remarkable couple undergoing both a kidney transplant and a kidney donation.**

The issue of kidney transplants have undergone a transformation in the halachic literature since the inception of kidney transplants. The first kidney transplant took place on June 17th, 1950. Ruth Tucker, the 44 year old recipient lived an extra five years. The next transplant took place in 1952 in Paris and then in 1954 in Boston.

Initially, the Tzitz Eliezer (Vol. VIII #15) and Dayan Weiss (Minchas Yitzchok Vol. VI #103) both forbade kidney transplant on account of the perception of danger to both the donor and the recipient. So did, Rav Ovadiah Yoseph originally, although he later changed (Dinei Yisroel p.25).

The problem, of course, was with the recipient's immune system. It would immediately and or chronically reject the transplanted kidney. Although medications could suppress the immune system, there was great risk of both infection and cancers such as skin cancer and lymphoma.

Eventually, however, as the safety of the procedure developed and became clear, the overwhelming number of Poskim permitted kidney transplants. The consensus of opinion until recently was that, while it is certainly meritorious to donate – there is no full-fledged obligation to do so.

### **TWO NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

Of late, two new development in kidney transplants have developed. The first was a protocol developed by Cedar's Sinai in Los Angeles that reduced the need for blood type compatibility and tissue compatibility. It was approved by the FDA in 2004. The second development can be called "transplant chains" where one person in Oregon can donate a kidney to another person in Oklahoma, which triggers a third person to donate to the first person's spouse back in Oregon. This new system was made possible through the confluence of kidney matching computer algorithms, cooperation between transplant centers, and advances in kidney shipping techniques. The couple whose refuah shleimah this article is dedicated toward are both part of such a transplant chain. Understandably, these two new developments will cause live kidney donations to skyrocket.

### **GENERAL OBLIGATION OF RESCUE**

All this brings us back to the general obligation of rescue. The Pasuk in Vayikra (19:16) states, "lo saamod al dam rayacha – do not stand idly by your brother's blood." Rav Yoseph Karo, in his Bais Yoseph commentary (CM 426) on the Tur quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi (Trumos 8:4) that requires us to endanger our lives to save others. Shockingly, as the SMA points out, Rav Karo does not cite this view in his actual Shulchan Aruch. The SMA explains that Rav Karo changed his mind and did not cite the Yerushalmi because the three major Rishonic codifiers (Rif, Rambam, and Rosh) do not cite the Yerushalmi.

Rav Eliezer Yehudah Waldenburg (Tzitz Eliezer Vol. IX #45) explains that the Bavli seems to have rejected the Yerushalmi (See also Pischei Teshuvah 426:2). Many Achronim (see for example Maharam Shick YD #155) seem to learn that the Gemorah in Bava Metziah (62a) regarding the debate between Ben Petura and Rabbi Akiva about two people in the desert where one has enough water only for one of the them to survive shows that the Bavli argues with the Yerushalmi. Rabbi Akiva states that v'chai bahem teaches us that one's own life has precedence over the others. The Maharam Shick explains that Ben Petura's opinion is that of the rejected Yerushalmi. The Mishnah Brurah (329:19), the font of normative halachic practice, rules that, although meritorious, one is not required to risk one's own life to save that of another.

### **THE RADBAZ**

The idea is generally predicated upon the responsa of the Radbaz (# 627) regarding a tragic case. A finance minister in a foreign country fled to Egypt because he was falsely accused of financial impropriety by others. The king was about to close in on him, when he fled. The king issued a proclamation

that he will only cut off the finance minister's hand if he turns himself in, but he will kill the ministers brother if he does not show up. The Radbaz ruled that, although meritorious, the minister was not obligated to return.

Most Achronim and Poskim of the past generation accepted the ruling of the Radbaz (See Shach YD 157:3; Pischei Teshuvah 157:3, Igros Moshe YD Vol. II 174; Tzitz Eliezer Vol. IX #45).

### **THE NEWER POSKIM**

Of late, however, a few Poskim have issued rulings that it is, in fact, an obligation to donate a kidney. It is not that they disagree with the Radbaz, but it is that they believe that the situation is no longer congruous to that of the Radbaz.

These Poskim raise a number of questions concerning the contemporary kidney transplant.

1] In light of the advances in Living Donor Kidney Transplantation (LDKT) is a person obligated to enter into a possible danger in order to save the life of a friend? Is a kidney donation considered dangerous at all?

2] Is one obligated to endure pain and suffering in order to save another?

3] Is there an obligation to speed up the kidney donation process?

4] What if it is unclear whether the operation will succeed?

5] Upon whom is it the greatest Mitzvah to donate?

6] Is there an obligation to donate when the organ is available from another or if there will be a possibility of an organ available at additional expense?

7] Can one harvest a kidney from a child who is unable to consent to the procedure?

Rav Chaim Yoseph Dovid Weiss, the Satmar Dayan in Antwerp and author of the Responsa series Vayaan Dovid writes (Vol. IV p. 196) that there is no danger involved in the operation and that it is a full-fledged halachic obligation. The same ruling was issued in a British based Torah journal entitled Kol HaTorah (#59 p. 175) in an article by Rabbi Eliezer Sternbuch of New York. As far as the issue of whether there is an obligation to perform it as soon as possible, Rabbi Weiss cites the Shulchan Aruch (YD 252:3) that when time is of the essence there is certainly such an obligation.

Regarding the issue of who should do it, Rabbi Weiss quotes the Shulchan Aruch (YD 251) regarding Hilchos Tzedaka that the obligation lies first and foremost among family members. He also cites the Gemorah in Bava Metziah (71a) that the obligation to perform chessed to another is incumbent upon the family members first.

When it is possible to receive the kidney in another manner albeit through expenses and the sick person has the resources to do so, Rav Weiss writes that there is no obligation incumbent upon the family member. It is crucial to note that this author had once researched the availability of kidneys and came upon a remarkable discovery. It seems that there are different ratings of kidneys- an A level kidney could last twenty years or more, while a B level kidney, generally from an older person or from someone who had compromised health can last five or ten years. In the state of Nevada there are B level kidneys readily available for transplant and there is generally very little waiting involved. The cost of transplantation there is often initially refused by insurance companies.

This author would like to respectfully suggest that, at the current state of affairs in medicine, the position of the Poskim who rule that it is meritorious but not obligatory is still the correct halachic conclusion.

There are two issues when discussing the concept of danger or non-danger to the kidney donor. There is the issue of the danger or non-danger involved in the operation itself and that of the repercussions or non-repercussions to the donor afterward.

Let's discuss the first issue. There are certainly many medical centers in the United States that certainly have 100.00 percent success rates, where there are zero deaths associated donating a kidney. However, although the fatality rate has been decreased to almost zero in other hospitals – is it so clear that this is considered "no danger?" The British based organization Giveakidney.org reports that in England the fatality rate is 1 in 3000. In the United States it has been estimated to be 1 in 5000 (Matas AJ, Bartlett ST,

Leichtman AB, et al. Morbidity and mortality after living donor kidney donation, 1999–2001: a survey of the United States transplant centres. *Am J Transplant* 2003;3:830–834.

The Sdei Chemed (Samech Klal 11 “v’Sham” and Klal 92 letter 6) seems to indicate that the criterion for Karov l’vadai is 1 in 10,000. here the danger is 1 in 5000, and according to another study 1 in 3300.

As far as the second issue is concerned, in an article entitled “Is Living Kidney Donation Really Safe” printed in the May 2007 edition of “Transplant Proceedings” (39(4):822-3), authors Azar SA, Nakhjavani MR, Tarzamni MK, Faragi A, Bahloli A, Badroghli N, reported that serious complications occurred 5.8% of the time. In 6.9% of the cases they studied, the patients serum creatinine was  $>or=1.4$  mg/dL. Microalbuminuria was found in 10.4%; hematuria in 13.9%; pyuria in 8.1%; and renal stone in 6.9%. Varicocele was found in 24.1% of male patients (23.3% of patients who had left nephrectomised). Persistent pain was reported by 44.1%. Antidepressants were prescribed to 9.3% of donors because of severe depression. Other studies, however, showed less problems (Lam N, Huang A, Feldman LS, et al. Acute dialysis risk in living kidney donors. *Nephrol Dial Transplant* 2012;27:3291–3295.).

Another aspect of the second issue is the shockingly high rate of obesity and diabetes in this country. Some thirty to 40 percent of diabetics develop kidney problems. Indeed, even if a diabetic has low blood pressure many doctors recommend that he or she should still take high blood pressure meds to protect future kidney function.

Although these issues are certainly minimal, it would seem to this author that if these numbers are accurate, they would change the status of this type of obligation from obligatory to voluntary – at least according to one reading of the Sdei Chemed.

It is theoretically possible that LDKT will have advanced so far that this halacha may change, but at this point these complications still exist.

#### OTHER HALACHIC ISSUES

There are also a few parenthetic issues as well. One of the Ten Commandments is “Lo sachmod” – not to Covet. This is defined as being desirous of a friend’s item and repeatedly requesting of him to sell it to you. The first time one asks – there is no prohibition. As an example, one may ask a neighbor one time to sell you his ’67 Mustang. Asking a second time is a violation of this prohibition.

Is there a prohibition of Lo Sachmod in asking someone else who has a second, extra kidney two times to donate? Generally speaking there is a Torah requirement to spend all of one’s money in order to avoid violating a negative commandment in the Torah. Does this idea mean that the prohibition of Lo Sachmod still exists regarding a kidney? Dayan Yaakov Yisroel Fisher zt”l in his *Even Yisroel* (Vol. VIII #105) rules that since the issue of Pikuach Nefesh applies here, the prohibition may be violated. The person may be more successful, however, in seeking other options, such as the Nevada one mentioned earlier.

May the Holy One grant the sick a refuah shleimah and continue blessing the work of those who both donate kidneys and save life in the field of medicine. May the donors be granted continued health, long life and nachas from all they do.

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#### **The Impact of Hukkim on Religious Discourse by R. David Silverstein**

Parshat Hukat begins with a detailed description of the purification ritual known as the “parah adumah” (red heifer). The purpose of this procedure is to purify someone who has become ritually contaminated by coming in contact with a human corpse. Among the many mysterious features of this legislation is the fact that the priest who performs the ritual cleansing

actually himself becomes ritually unclean by virtue of his involvement in the purification process. Rashi (Bamidbar 19:1) cites the talmudic view claiming that the para adumah is representative of a genre of mitzvot (hukkim) whose reasons remain unknown to the Jewish people. The Ramban (Vayikra 19:19) clarifies Rashi’s position and states that Rashi did not mean to claim that these types of mitzvot have no reason or are fundamentally illogical. Rather, these are types of ordinances whose reasons are simply unknown.

The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:33) argues adamantly that all mitzvot, including hukkim, have some rational basis and serve some form of ethical, societal or personal religious function. Referencing a powerful biblical citation to substantiate his view, the Rambam cites the verse (Devarim 4:6) which states that when the gentile nations “hear all those statutes (hukkim),” they will reply by stating, “surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” The Rambam continues by noting that if a significant number of the 613 mitzvot have no rational basis, what would compel the gentile world to find beauty in a life dedicated to God’s commandments? According to the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:49), the fact that the rationale behind some mitzvot still remains a mystery is simply a function of our lack of historical awareness. The more we gain clarity into the world of ancient Israel, the more likely we are to understand the reasons for even those mitzvot known as hukkim.

The dichotomy between “hukkim” (mitzvot whose rationale are not known) versus “mishpatim” (mitzvot whose rational basis is obvious) has been used by some contemporary theologians to highlight the role of “intellectual surrender” in one’s religious life. Rabbi Michael Rosensweig (link), for example, claims that accepting the paradoxical elements in the red heifer ritual “with equanimity, constitutes an impressive act of faith and commitment.” Moreover, Rabbi Rosensweig argues that even thinkers like the Rambam and Ramban who emphasize trying to decipher the logic behind all mitzvot (including hukkim), have their perspectives rooted “in the concept of faith and surrender.” For example, the Rambam, according to Rabbi Rosensweig, “emphasizes that the Torah often gives priority to chukim over mishpatim precisely because they unambiguously reflect the Divine authority that is the foundation of the entire Torah (ibid).”

While the idea of intellectual and spiritual submission is certainly a component of religious life for anyone engaging a divinely ordained system, excessive focus on the submissive side of the halachic experience contains its own risks. For example, Rabbi Robert Klapper (link) notes that, “categorizing a mitzvah-detail, mitzvah, or complex of mitzvot as chok rather than mishpat has the effect of quarantining it from normal halachic conversation, and indeed, it has the effect of stigmatizing anyone seeking to reintroduce it as lacking proper religious intuition.” In much of contemporary conversation about halacha, for example, liberal Orthodox halachists often classify controversial halachic positions (ex. homosexuality, gender distinction, etc.) “as chukim, fully authoritative as Halakhah, but providing no guidance – perhaps quite the contrary – on matters they don’t directly cover (ibid).” On the flip side, rabbis justifying traditional norms when addressing modern problems often try to highlight the “mishpat” aspect of mitzvot, limiting the role of the chok to very extreme circumstances. By doing so, these thinkers, “effectively those who quarantine of closing themselves off to the full implications of G-d’s word (ibid).”

As contemporary Jews aware of the dialectic inherent in the modern experience of religion, the example of the “chok” serves as a useful case study in navigating the tensions of halachic living. As a default, we should always have in mind the Rambam’s position that the Torah self-proclaims itself to be a document that will be philosophically and religiously intriguing to those who encounter its message. As a result, it becomes a religious duty to try to articulate the values inherent in the Torah’s teachings and use them as a guide in dealing with modern challenges. That being said, there are some instances where man’s intellect is stifled by the mystery of the divine will. While we hope and try to significantly mitigate these scenarios, they do

provide a periodic opportunity for us to “surrender” our intellectual capacities before the divine command. By doing so we affirm that the Torah is, in fact our guide, and not simply an ancient text which validates the contemporary zeitgeist.

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com date: Wed, Jun 24, 2015 at 12:03 AM subject: Parshat Chukat 5775- Rabbi Berel Wein Home Weekly Parsha CHUKAT Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog CHUKAT

Over all of the millennia since the incident described in this week's parsha regarding Moshe striking the rock instead of speaking to it, the great commentators to Torah have struggled to make this incident more understandable and meaningful to us ordinary mortals. At first glance, the punishment does not seem to fit the crime. Because of this, many of the commentators have seen the incident of hitting the rock instead of speaking to it not as an isolated incident, but rather as the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak. Maimonides explains it as the accumulation of incidents where Moshe allowed human anger to overtake his otherwise unquestioned loyalty and obedience to God's word. Abarbanel also sees it as the culmination of preceding events in the life and career of Moshe. Other commentators, such as Rabbi Meir Simcha Cohen of Dvinsk, Latvia, hesitant to place the entire burden of this strange incident on Moshe alone, attributes the fact that Moshe would not lead the Jewish people into the land of Israel as being not so much a punishment of Moshe but a reality that for this new generation of Jews. They never experienced Egypt and since they saw Moshe as a distant almost supernatural personality, Moshe could no longer be effective as the leader of Israel. The incident described in this week's parsha is the catalyst for his not entering the Land of Israel, but not really the true cause of his exclusion from further leadership of the people. In effect, this latter line of thinking portrays Moshe, the greatest of all humans, as being subject to the grinding gristmill of generational history and events. However we will deal with this incident, it will always remain rationally perplexing to us. There is a debate amongst the thinkers and scholars of Israel as to whether the youthful Moshe is to be held blameless for slaying the Egyptian taskmaster. Rashi points out to us that Moshe slew him by the use of his tongue, pronouncing the ineffable name of God, so to speak. Moshe then came to realize the power of words, especially of holy and sacred words. That is why he composed the final book of the Torah in order that those holy words would have an eternal and powerful effect in guiding and teaching all later generations of the Jewish people. Being able to kill someone with a stick, a spear, a gun or a bomb is unfortunately a natural and everyday occurrence in human life. Being able to destroy an enemy by pronouncing a holy word – the name of God, so to speak – is a completely different and supernatural event. Perhaps this is the basis for understanding the punishment of Moshe for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. Hitting the rock, miraculous as it may seem to some, will be interpreted by others as somehow being natural and ordinary, a magical trick. Hitting the rock employs man-made tools and thus when human action is involved the presence of God is often hidden, if not even disregarded. Speaking to the rock, like speaking to the Egyptian taskmaster in holiness and faith, is not subject to rational interpretation. That would have been the supreme sanctification of God's presence, so to speak, in human events. And, alas, perhaps therein lies the shortcoming that Heaven saw in Moshe's response to the lack of water in the desert for the Jewish people. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Jun 25, 2015 at 6:29 PM  
**Anger Management**  
**Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

There are some, say the Talmud, who acquire their world in an hour and others who lose it in an hour. No example of the latter is more arresting and bewildering than the famous episode in this week's parsha. The people have asked for water. God tells Moses to take a staff and speak to the rock and water will appear. This then follows:

He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?' Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in Me enough to honour Me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.'

"Is this the Torah and this its reward?" we are tempted to say. What was Moses' sin that it merited such punishment? In previous years I have expressed my view that Moses did not sin, nor was he punished. It was simply that each generation needs its own leaders. Moses was the right, indeed the only, leader capable of taking the Israelites out of Egypt. It needed another kind of leader and a different style of leadership, to take the next generation into the Promised Land.

This year, though, looking at the ethics of the Bible, it seems more appropriate to look at a different explanation, the one given by Maimonides in Shemoneh Perakim, the "Eight Chapters" that form the preface to his commentary to the Mishnah, tractate Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers.

In the course of these chapters Maimonides sets out a surprisingly contemporary account of Judaism as a training in "emotional intelligence." [1] Healthy emotions are essential to a good and happy life, but temperament is not something we choose. Some people just happen to be more patient or calm or generous-spirited or optimistic than others. Emotions were at one stage called the "passions," a word that comes from the same root as "passive," implying that they are feelings that happen to us rather reactions we chose to have. Despite this, Maimonides believed that with sufficient training, we could overcome our destructive emotions and reconfigure our affective life.

In general, Maimonides, like Aristotle, believed that emotional intelligence consists in striking a balance between excess and deficiency, too much and too little. Too much fear makes me a coward, too little makes me rash and foolhardy, taking unnecessary risks. The middle way is courage. There are, however, two exceptions, says Maimonides: pride and anger. Even a little pride (some sages suggested "an eighth or an eighth") is too much. Likewise even a little anger is wrong.

That, says Maimonides, is why Moses was punished: because he lost his temper with the people when he said, "Listen, you rebels." To be sure, there were other occasions on which he lost his temper – or at least looked as if he had. His reaction to the sin of the Golden Calf, which included smashing the tablets, was hardly eirenic or relaxed. But that case was different. The Israelites had committed a sin. God himself was threatening to destroy the people. Moses had to act decisively and with sufficient force to restore order to a people wildly out of control.

Here, though, the people had not sinned. They were thirsty. They needed water. God was not angry with them. Moses' intemperate reaction was therefore wrong, says Maimonides. To be sure, anger is something to which we are all prone. But Moses was a leader, and a leader must be a role model. That is why Moses was punished so heavily for a failure that might have been more lightly punished in someone less exalted.

In addition, says Maimonides, by losing his temper Moses failed to respect the people and might have demoralized them. Knowing that Moses was God's emissary, the people might have concluded that if Moses was angry with them, so too was God. Yet they had done no more than ask for water. Giving the people the impression that God was angry with them was a failure to sanctify God's name. Thus one moment's anger was sufficient to deprive Moses of the reward surely most precious to him, of seeing the culmination of his work by leading the people across the Jordan into the Promised Land.

The sages were outspoken in their critique of anger. They would thoroughly have approved of the modern concept of anger management. They did not like anger at all, and reserved some of their sharpest language to describe it.

"The life of those who can't control their anger is not a life," they said (Pesachim 113b). Resh Lakish said, "When a person becomes angry, if he is a sage his wisdom departs from him; if he is a prophet his prophecy departs from him" (Pesachim 66b). Maimonides said that when someone becomes angry it is as if he has become an idolater (Hilkhot Deot 2: 3).

What is dangerous about anger is that it causes us to lose control. It activates the most primitive part of the human brain that bypasses the neural circuitry we use when we reflect and choose on rational grounds. While in its grip we lose the ability to step back and judge the possible consequences of our actions. The result is that in a moment of irascibility we can do or say things we may regret for the rest of our lives.

For that reason, rules Maimonides (Hilkhot Deot 2: 3), there is no "middle way" when it comes to anger. Instead we must avoid it under any circumstance. We must go to the opposite extreme. Even when anger is justified, we must avoid it. There may be times

when it is necessary to look as if we are angry. That is what Moses did when he saw the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf, and broke the tablets of stone. Yet even then, says Maimonides, inwardly you should be calm.

The Orchof Tzadikim (15th century) notes that anger destroys personal relationships. Short-tempered people scare others, who therefore avoid coming close to them. Anger drives out the positive emotions – forgiveness, compassion, empathy and sensitivity. The result is that irascible people end up lonely, shunned and disappointed. Bad tempered people achieve nothing but their bad temper (Kiddushin 40b). They lose all else.

The classic role model of patience in the face of provocation was Hillel. The Talmud (Shabbat 31a) says that two people once made a wager with each other, saying, "He who makes Hillel angry shall receive four hundred zuz." One said, "I will go and provoke him." It was Erev Shabbat and Hillel was washing his hair. The man stood by the door of his house and called, "Is Hillel here, is Hillel here?" Hillel robed himself and came out, saying, "My son, what do you seek?" "I have a question to ask," he said. "Ask, my son," replied Hillel. He said, "Why are the heads of the Babylonians round?" "My son, you ask a good question," said Hillel. "The reason is that they have no skilled midwives."

The man left, paused, then returned, crying out, "Is Hillel here? Is Hillel here?" Again, Hillel robed and came out, saying, "My son, what do you seek?" "I have another question." "Ask, my son." "Why are the eyes of the Palmyreans bleared?" Hillel replied, "My son, you ask a good question. The reason is that they live in sandy places."

He left, waited, then came back a third time, calling, "Is Hillel here? Is Hillel here?" Again, Hillel robed and came out, saying, "My son, what do you seek?" "I have another question." "Ask, my son." "Why are the feet of Africans wide?" "My son, you ask a good question. The reason is that they live in watery marshes."

"I have many questions to ask," said the man, "but I am worried that you might become angry." Hillel then robed himself and sat and said, "Ask all the questions you have to ask." "Are you the Hillel who is called the nasi [leader, prince] of Israel?" "Yes," said Hillel. "In that case, said the man, may there not be many like you in Israel." "Why so, my son?" he asked. "Because I have just lost four hundred zuz because of you!" "Be careful of your moods," said Hillel. "You may lose four hundred zuz and yet another four hundred zuz through Hillel, yet Hillel will not lose his temper."

It was this quality of patience under provocation that was one of the factors, according to the Talmud (Eruvin 13b), that led the sages to rule according to the school of Hillel rather than that of Shammai.

The best way of defeating anger is to pause, stop, reflect, refrain, count to ten, and breathe deeply. If necessary, leave the room, go for a walk, meditate, or vent your toxic feelings alone. It is said that about one of the Rebbes of Lubavitch that whenever he felt angry, he would take down the Shulchan Arukh to see whether anger was permitted under the circumstances. By the time he had finished studying, his anger had disappeared.

The verdict of Judaism is simple: Either we defeat anger or anger will defeat us.

[1] The term was introduced by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, subsequently popularized by Daniel Goleman.

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Jun 25, 2015 at 6:42 PM subject:

**Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** - Parshas Chukas

**PARASHAS CHUKAS** And they shall take to you a Red Cow. (19:2) The Parah Adumah, Red Cow (heifer), is considered the quintessential chok, mitzvah whose reason defies human rationale. There is an aspect to this mitzvah, which although paradoxical in nature, is symbolically perceivable. Indeed, at first glance, the Parah Adumah incorporates two opposites. On the one hand, it must be totally red: even two black hairs render it invalid. This is puzzling, since the color red is usually identified with sin. Red is the symbol of blood. The Navi Yeshayahu (1:18) says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Why should a cow whose function is to purify be the color of sin? Should a cow that must be free of any blemish be red? Is the color of sin not a blemish in its own right?

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, looks at another of the requirements of the Parah Adumah as a source from which to derive an explanation for this difficulty. The Torah requires the Parah Adumah to be an animal, Asher lo alah aleha ol, "Upon which a yoke had not come." We might be able to apply this concept to human endeavor and a Jew's collective responsibility for his brothers and sisters. We often encounter individuals who have been blessed with incredible talents and strengths, acumen and personality, that could be of critical assistance to others. Yet, they do not apply these G-d-given gifts for the public good. They use them for themselves, for self-glorification, personal advancement, as a reason to lord over those who are not as blessed as they are.

One who is blessed, but uses his blessing for the wrong purpose, is misappropriating

G-d's gift. Indeed, the very talents with which he has been endowed become the source of his own downfall. It is very much like an individual who is given a shiny, beautiful gold ring, who, instead of wearing it, places it in the nose of a pig.

In lashon hakodesh, Hebrew, we refer to the obligation of the Jew to accept responsibility for his fellow's needs as, laseis b'ol im chaveiro: to carry the yoke with one's friend; to empathize with his pain; to carry his burden with him. Hashem carries the pain of the unfortunate. He expects the high and mighty of this world to get off their high perch and lend a hand, to assist another Jew. Who has greater superiority than Hashem? Yet, He feels the pain of the depressed and oppressed, commiserates with them, and sympathizes with them in their time of need.

Despite the Jew's inherent obligation to reach out and help, some individuals think that they are too good, too high, too special, too mighty, to act in such a manner. They snub anyone who is not as blessed as they are. For some "reason," they are never available; they just cannot seem to find the time to help the Jew who does not share equal standing on their social strata with them. For these people, the talents with which they have been blessed are nothing more than a kardom lachpor bah, "A spade with which to dig." They do not realize exactly what it really is that they should be "digging."

Let us take a look at the purification process of the person who has become spiritually contaminated by a corpse. The Torah writes (Bamidbar 19:6), "The Kohen shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson thread, and he shall throw them into the burning of the cow." We find hyssop used as a tool for the purification of the metzora, spiritual leper. Rashi (Vayikra 14:4) explains its significance as being indicative of what must occur within the metzora in order for the process to work. It is important that the metzora, whose sin of slandering people resulting from his haughtiness, his feeling better than others, must descend from his lofty perch to the level of humility - which is the antidote and foundation of his penance and resulting atonement. Hyssop is a lowly bush; thus, it symbolizes humility.

Rav Alpert supplements this idea by pointing out that one single hyssop is insufficient. He must take a bundle, an agudah, because, as he suggests, it indicates togetherness, solidarity, uniting Jews together through empathy and care for one another. The high and mighty must unite with the powerless and weak; the successful with those do not seem to make it; the strong with those who are vulnerable to anything and everything.

One should not view himself as being better than others, distinct from society. The issues which plague segments of our community should be viewed as issues which plague the entire community. We must bond together to rid our community of its spiritual filth, its moral bankruptcy, the unethical and the immoral. Every problem should be viewed through the lens of the community - not of the individual. We are called "Klal" Yisrael for a reason. We are all one large community, whose members work together to solve the issues that plague us all.

Having said this, we turn to the Parah Adumah and how the above thesis can explain the anomalies of its purification process. One who has become defiled by contact with a deceased human being can be purified only through the process of being sprinkled with Mei Chatas, purification water, of which the ashes of the Parah Adumah is the primary ingredient. Only a Parah Adumah can purify one who is tamei meis - which is the highest degree of tumah. Rav Alpert suggests a profound thought which gives rationale to the extreme level of tumah "achieved" by a meis, corpse. The deceased is no longer a part of society. He is eternally separated from the living, and, thus, unable to share in their burden. The extreme level of spiritual defilement is sadly reached when one can no longer associate with others. He is, regrettably, in a world all his own.

How can one who is at the highest level of spiritual achievement connect with one who is far below him? Can he who has achieved spiritually elite status ally himself with one who is relatively spiritually unsophisticated and base? They live in two disparate worlds with nothing in common. How can they come together?

Rav Alpert turns to the pasuk, Vayikchu eilecha Parah Adumah, "And they (the people) shall take to you a Red Cow." The people should go to Moshe Rabbeinu, their quintessential leader, who, by his very demeanor, teaches us the error of our assumption that the "high" and the "low" cannot network and join with one another.

Can we find anyone who achieved more than Moshe? Was there ever a greater, loftier, Jew than Moshe? Indeed, there never was - nor will there ever be - another Moshe. Yet, he devoted all of himself, his talents, acumen and strengths, to descend to the people, to demonstrate by personal example and teaching that one can come down. Not only was he the most elevated of all men, but he was also the most humble. He came down. Once (for whatever reason, which is beyond the scope of this paper), he became angry with Klal Yisrael when they demanded water and responded with Shimu na ha'morim, "Listen now, O rebels." His punishment was losing his opportunity to join his people in entering Eretz Yisrael.

Rashi teaches that the mitzvah of Parah Adumah is compensatory for the sin of the Golden Calf. "Let the mother come and clean up the mess made by its calf." We think of the sinners of the Golden Calf as being the individuals who created the molten image,

who danced before it and debased themselves in response to their new "intermediary." While it is true that it was the mixed multitude who instigated and actively participated in a leading role in worshipping this idol, they were relatively few in number in light of the overall punishment sustained by the entire nation. Indeed, they constituted but a minority of the nation.

This bit of information illuminates for us why the Parah Adumah specifically provides the most appropriate medium for catalyzing atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. Veritably, it was a minority which bore the brunt of punishment for their direct responsibility in creating the Golden Calf. This does not mean, however, that the majority did not carry any onus of guilt for their "part" in the sin. If they did nothing, how could they be blamed?

In truth, it was specifically their non-involvement which was the basis of their need to provide atonement. A lack of involvement which manifests itself by self-righteous individuals lamely standing by the wayside, while a minority of wicked people carry out a gross chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name, is a sin. When they heard that part of the tzibbur, community, was actively involved in sinful behavior, they plugged their ears, closed their eyes, and went about their business as usual. It had nothing to do with them. They were expressing that it was none of their business. This is a form of arrogance which is unforgivable, because their inactivity allowed a chillul Hashem to go unchecked and unchastised. As a result, their non-involvement was unpardonable.

Those who delude themselves into thinking that, as a result of their elite status, they do not share a common fate with the rest of society are sadly mistaken. As the majority of the klal could lower themselves "to carry the burden with the rest of the tzibbur" during the sin of the Golden Calf, something for which they were punished, so, too, will all those who think that they are "above it" discover that they are not.

This is the law when a man dies in a tent. Everyone coming into the tent and everything in it shall be tamei, ritually unclean, seven days... and Miriam died there and was buried there... and when all the people saw that Aharon had died, they wept for Aharon for thirty days. (19:14; 20:1,29)

The parsha addresses a number of pertinent issues, among which are the laws of tumah and taharah, ritual contamination and purity, following contact with death and the deaths of the righteous; namely, the death of Miriam HaNeviah and Aharon HaKohen. Life is filled with ambiguity, and death is the greatest paradox of all. This notion is perhaps underscored in the Torah's order of the purification process for one who has come in contact with the deceased. On the third and seventh day, the ritually unclean person is sprinkled with a solution of pure water mixed with the ashes of the Parah Adumah, Red Cow (Heifer), which had been burned with cedar wood, hyssop and wool dyed with a red extract derived from certain worms. Paradoxically, the purifying waters render the tamei person clean, yet renders the clean man who prepares it tamei. This is only one of the many anomalies of dying, the interface between the life of this world and the life one merits in the world of Eternal Truth. This is but the beginning of the paradoxes which challenge us as we confront our own mortality. Death provides no distinction between those who were as noble and lofty as the cedar in life, and those whose life, its endeavor, and activities were as low as the hyssop. They both meet the same physical end, in the ground, a place of worms.

Is death really the end of life? Chazal teach us that physical death is a perception that the living, because of their mortal existence, often misconceive. They posit that the righteous, who live a life of the spirit, are actually more alive in the next world. The wicked, however, who live a life of physicality, addicted to sins of the flesh, are not truly alive - even in this world. The primary focus of the Torah's laws concerning the mourning and purification practices is for the purpose of teaching the living the true meaning of life. This is what Shlomo Hamelech alludes to when he writes in Sefer Koheles (7:2), *Tov laleches el bais avel mileches el bais mishteh, b'asher hu sof kol ha'adam, v'ha'chai yitein el libo*, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to a house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living should take it to heart."

The Bostoner Rebbe, zl, asks a powerful question, one which I think each and every person must honestly ask himself. Regrettably, it is the obvious answer from which we all shy away. When a person passes from the world, we often hear the question asked by those who were close to him, "Oh, why did this man die?" We are clueless about Hashem's ways, and, to some, simply asking the question expunges some of their emotions. It is almost as if they lay the "blame" for this person's death at Heaven's threshold. Yet, how seldom do we hear when a child is born, "Why was this baby born?" This is probably because we do not want to know the "why" of birth. After all, it entails responsibility.

Surely, life and death are linked with one another. How can we hope to discover the purpose of death until we discover the purpose of life - and live it accordingly? Parashas Chukas - if learned properly - gives us a glimpse, a hint of how to proceed in life. We derive life's lesson from death: If you are as haughty as a cedar become as humble as a hyssop, then you are able to purify yourself - as well as others. One should not attempt

to help others until his own life is in order.

And the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died there and she was buried there. (20:1) As a result of their involvement in the Mei Merivah, waters of strife, Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen were not permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael (Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it, as Hashem had instructed him. The reason that this was considered a breach in obedience which warranted his losing out on Eretz Yisrael is far too complex a topic to be addressed within the limitations of this paper.) Miriam HaNeviah also died in the wilderness. Why did she lose out on the opportunity of a lifetime?

Horav Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, suggests that Miriam inadvertently played a role in her own loss to entering Eretz Yisrael. In his commentary to the beginning of Parashas Shelach (ibid 13:2), Rashi explains the juxtaposition of the episode of the meraglim, spies, upon the incident in which Miriam spoke against Moshe. When the meraglim saw the punishment sustained by Miriam as a result of lashon hora, evil speech, they should have taken heed and not slandered the Holy Land. Thus, the reason that the meraglim were punished may in a roundabout manner be attributed to Miriam. As a result of their slander and Klal Yisrael's negative reaction, the nation was prevented from reaching the goal of entering Eretz Yisrael.

What a frightening lesson. Miriam did not interact with the meraglim. She did not slander Eretz Yisrael. On the contrary, she spearheaded the women's faith in Hashem. She sang Shirah, a song of praise, to Hashem following the Splitting of the Red Sea, as did her brother, Moshe. Nonetheless, if an individual of her exemplary stature acted in a manner which should have served as a lesson for others - and it did not, not as a result of an error on her part - but because of their failing - she is punished. If the lesson that could have been derived from her infraction was inadvertently the cause of their punishment, then she must in some way share with them in their penance. Thus, if they could not enter Eretz Yisrael - neither could she.

Having said this, we should attempt to apply this lesson to our lives, as well. If inadvertency is cause for punishment, how much more so does the onus of guilt hang over the head of someone whose actions were the direct catalyst of another Jew's sin. This is especially true when one maintains a position of significance, in which he is held in esteem. He can expect people either to wrongly follow in his footsteps or be turned off as a result of his actions. As a member of the Mamleches Kohanim v'goi kadosh, Kingdom of priests and a holy nation, we are not accorded the luxury of "taking it easy" or telling others to "mind your own business; my life is my life; I can do what I want." We have a responsibility to Hashem to maintain the highest degree of propriety at all times.

Miriam died there and was buried there. (20:1)

Rashi quotes the Talmud Bava Basra 17a, where Chazal teach that Miriam HaNeviah merited missas neshikah, death through Hashem's kiss, as did her brothers, Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen. Rashi wonders why the Torah does not add *al pi Hashem*, by the mouth of Hashem, as it writes concerning the passing of her brothers. He explains that it would not have been *derech kavod shel Maalah*, appropriate respect for Hashem Yisborach to make such a statement. Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, asks the question that is probably posed by any student of Torah, anyone who has read and truly understood the depth of meaning of Shir HaShirim, a sefer written by Shlomo Hamelech, which is deemed to be *kodesh kodoshim*, holy of holies. In fact, in one of the opening pesukim, the relationship between Hashem and Klal Yisrael is expressed in much the same way. *Yishakeini mineshikos Pihu*, "He shall kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." The commentators, namely Rashi, say this is similar to the relationship between the chassan and kallah, newly-married couple. Apparently, that pasuk does not seem to feel it is presented disrespectfully. What difference is there between Shir HaShirim and the Torah?

Rav Schwab explains that *missas neshikah* means much more than Hashem's kiss. It is a departure from this world which occurs as a result of a unique closeness with Hashem, that is so powerfully intense that the neshamah, soul, separates itself from the body. Under normal circumstances, one can achieve this level of *deveikus baHashem*, clinging to G-d, only through relentless Torah study. This is the *madreigah*, spiritual level, achievable by a man, upon whom there is a *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah*. A woman, however, has no obligation to study Torah. How, then, was Miriam able to merit *missas neshikah*?

Here we derive a glimpse of Miriam's outstanding spiritual stature. Her outstanding devotion to Hashem, her consummate and unstinting perfection of her unique *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty, was so special that she achieved a status equal to that which Moshe and Aharon accomplished through Torah study. Thus, by underscoring the fact that Miriam died as a result of Hashem's kiss, it would appear to undermine the exalted status of Torah study. Her unprecedented (for a woman) manner of leaving this mortal world implies that, indeed, another avenue exists, other than Torah study, for achieving *deveikus baHashem*. It is a *deveikus* that is so incredibly intense that one's *neshamah* falls away. This would denigrate the *kavod*, respect, attributable to Above, a

reference to the Torah which has descended to us from Heaven.

The Rav now addresses the tragic incursion of feminism into the Torah camp. The very term feminism is secular in nature, since there is no place for innovative religion in Judaism that has not been transmitted via the mesorah from generation to generation. Nonetheless, we have been plagued (and I use the word plague by design) with feministic ideals that present a new way to align Judaism with the secular world. Sadly, some of these infractions have made inroads within the Orthodox camp (or at least among those who still call themselves Orthodox). We refer to the instance of egalitarian services with women reading from the Torah, chanting the Haftarah, dancing hakafos with a Sefer Torah, even wearing Talleisim. (There are many examples, but I have chosen only the most outrageous, out of respect for diplomacy).

Rav Schwab focuses on the meaning of Havdalah, separation, between holy and mundane, and even between holy and holy. When Yom Tov follows Shabbos, we recite the following Havdalah prayer: Bein kedushas Shabbos l'kedushas Yom Tov hivdalta; v'Kidasha es amcha Yisrael b'Kedushasecha, "You have separated and You have sanctified Your nation, Yisrael, in Your holiness." The prayer is concluded with the blessing of Hamavdil bein kodesh l'kodesh, "He Who separates between holy and holy."

Shabbos has kedushah, holiness, and so does Yom Tov, but the kedushah is not the same. Hashem has distinguished between the degrees of sanctity. Likewise, in the Bais Hamikdash, there were varied levels of kedushah. The Heichal was not as holy as the Kodesh haKodoshim; neither was the Levi on the same level as the Kohen.

Likewise, as members of the am segulah, treasured nation, we all possess a degree of sanctity unlike any other people. Hashem distinguished between the kedushah inherent in Jewish men and the kedushah inherent in Jewish women. To maintain their personal/individual level of kedushah, they have each been given gender-specific assignments. Men wear Tzitzis and Tefillin. Women were, instead, given a special mandate to emphasize the laws of tznius, modesty/chastity. (Thus, a woman who dresses in the manner appropriate for a bas melech is acting in her realm of kedushah, as does a man who puts on Tzitzis and Tefillin. If the woman, due to extreme insecurity decides to change the role, she transgresses the laws of tznius. After all, what greater lack of tznius is there than a woman who publicizes her insecurity by wearing a Tallis and Tefillin and attempts to "battle" and "conquer" the kedushah of the Kosel Maaravi?) Furthermore, while men wear their Tallis and Tefillin for a short time, these women are enjoined to adhere to the laws of tznius as a way of life. In the manner that they dress, they embody and declare to the world the pasuk at the end of Krias Shema, V'lo sassuru acharei levavchem v'acharei eineichem, "Stray not after your heart and after your eyes." Thus, V'rau kol amei haaretz ki shem Hashem nikra alecha, "And the nations of the world will see that the Name of Hashem rests upon you." This will lead to v'hayisem kedoshim l'Eilokeichem, "And you shall be holy to your G-d."

Concerning the mitzvah of limud haTorah, it is true that women are not enjoined to study Torah diligently as men are commanded. This is especially true concerning Torah SheBaal Peh (which is another area in which those who would impugn the Torah have found a fertile spot to demonstrate their misplaced sense of values). Women also do not have the prohibition of bitul Torah, wasting time from studying Torah. They do, however, have the mitzvah to instill and infuse their husbands and children with ahavas haTorah, love for Torah. Without the female input which imbues the ahavas Torah - no learning is possible. One cannot possibly learn unless he has a deep abiding love for the Torah.

Rabbi Akiva, who rose to become the quintessential Tanna and leader of Klal Yisrael, would refer to his wife: Sheli v'shelachem shelah hee, "What is mine and what is yours is (actually) (from) hers." Did she teach them Torah? It was Rabbi Akiva who taught them. Did she teach Rabbi Akiva Torah? Also not. So why does she receive such adulation? It is because she had imbued Rabbi Akiva with her love of Torah. It was her love that served as the sparkplug that jumpstarted Rabbi Akiva's learning and enabled him to learn so well.

Va'ani Tefillah V'Torascha u'devarcha yasim al libo. And he will take to heart Your Torah and Your word.

Each man has a special place on his body where the Tefillin shel yad, Tefillin of the hand, are placed. Likewise, he has a specific place where the Tefillin shel rosh, Tefillin of the head, are to be worn. To place the Tefillin of the hand on one's foot is as if he did not wear Tefillin. They belong on the hand - period. Horav Reuven Melamed explains that Torah also belongs in a specific place: in one's heart. The Torah must penetrate one's heart or it will miss its point of efficacy on the person. Thus, the avodah, service/goal, of a person who studies Torah is to apply it to the recesses of his heart. This is where it belongs. The Alter, zl, m'Kelm, comments that our derech, approach, to serving Hashem in life, in our worldly endeavor, is through the Torah. The study of mussar, ethical character refinement, is the derech to the derech, path towards achieving the goal of making Torah our only road to Hashem. Rav Reuven observes that, quite possibly, mussar is the vehicle for bringing the Torah to appropriately "settle" in our

heart. Mussar is the steering mechanism which guides the Torah to become a part of our heart.

Dedicated to my husband, Yitzhok Chaim Donskoy, who inspires and encourages me to be the very best version of myself. May you have success in all your endeavors... to 120!

Happy Birthday!

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Parshas Chukas

Who is Wise? Volume 29, No. 35 10 Tammuz 5775 June 27, 2015

Sponsored by Martin and Michelle Swartz on the yahrzeit of his grandfather John Hofmann a"h (12 Tammuz)

Today's Learning: Nach: Tehilim 123-124 Mishnah: Negaim 10:1-2 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 34 Halachah: Mishnah Berurah 616:1-617:1

This week's parashah opens with the mitzvah of the parah adumah / red heifer, which our Sages teach is a "chok" or "chukah" / a decree whose reason we cannot comprehend. Midrash Rabbah quotes King Shlomo, "the wisest of all men," as saying about this mitzvah (in the words of Kohelet 7:23), "All this I tested with wisdom; I said I could become wise, but it is beyond me." King Shlomo said: I comprehended the entire Torah, but when I came to this mitzvah, I studied it, I examined it, and I inquired about it, but I did not understand it. "I said I could become wise, but it is beyond me." [Until here from the midrash]

R' Yeshayah Horowitz z"l (the Shelah Hakadosh; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) comments on this midrash: One who studies and investigates and finally comes to the realization that he cannot understand is a truly wise person. Our philosophers made a similar statement about studying the Creator: "The ultimate knowledge of You is the knowledge that we cannot know You." This, continues the Shelah Hakadosh, is alluded to in the verse (Shir Ha'shirim 1:8), "If you do not know, beautiful among the women . . ." The Jewish People are Hashem's bride, so-to-speak. What makes us beautiful to Hashem? The knowledge that we cannot know Him. Similarly, regarding parah adumah, when I understand that it is beyond me, that I cannot understand it, then I am wise. (Shnei Luchot Ha'berit)

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"This is chukat ha'Torah / the decree of the Torah . . ." (19:2)

Rashi z"l comments: "Because the satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, 'What is this command [i.e., the parah adumah / red heifer] and what reason is there for it?'--therefore the Torah uses the term 'chukah' / 'decree,' implying--it is My enactment; you have no right to question it."

R' Yehuda Loewe z"l (Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes: The word "chukah" appears in connection with many mitzvot of the Torah, yet Rashi does not make a similar comment about those commandments. What prompted Rashi's comment here is not the word "chukah," but the expression, "chukat ha'Torah."

Maharal explains: When a mitzvah is being performed, it makes no difference whether or not the person doing the mitzvah understands it. What matters at that moment is only that the action of the mitzvah is being performed properly. Thus, when the Torah speaks of performing mitzvot, it can refer to any of them as a decree that is not understood. Whether the person doing the mitzvah understands it simply does not matter.

Here, however, the verse says, "chukat ha'Torah / the decree of the Torah." "Torah" means "teaching," while "chukah" means "a decree that we don't understand." This makes "chukat ha'Torah" an oxymoron--a "teaching" that cannot be understood--which is what prompted Rashi's comment that even though, when we study the mitzvah of parah adumah, we cannot understand it, we must not question it. (Gur Aryeh)

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“He shall purify himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day become pure; but if he will not purify himself on the third day, then on the seventh day he will not become pure.” (19:12)

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

R' Chaim Tিরer z"l (1760-1817; better known as “R' Chaim of Czernowitz”; rabbi in several Bessarabian cities and early chassidic figure) offers an additional lesson:

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

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“Moshe and Aharon gathered the congregation before the rock and he said to them, ‘Listen now, you morim / rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?’” (20:10)

Rabbeinu Nissim z"l (“Ran”; Spain; 1290-1380) writes: Moshe Rabbeinu was punished for these words because he generalized in criticizing Bnei Yisrael. It's true that the individual Jews whom he was addressing were “morim” / “rebels.” However, our Sages say that one should be in awe of any tzibbur / assembly of Jews. Jews as a group can never be labeled by a derogatory term, for even if the individuals in the group lack redeeming qualities that others in the group possess, the group as a whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. Even if one is an intentional sinner in his own right, if he is part of a gathering that is serving Hashem, the group is enhanced because that sinner is part of it.

How so? Our Sages find a precedent in the ketoret / incense in the Temple, which had one foul-smelling spice in it--the chelbenah. The Ran says that this spice served to “awaken” the fragrance of the other spices [presumably through a chemical reaction]. Similarly, when people with different strengths and weaknesses get together, they awaken previously dormant positive traits in each other.

However, the Ran continues, this is true only if the group is not made up entirely of like-minded resha'im / wicked people. If all the members of the group have exactly the same bad traits, then they merely strengthen each other's wickedness. (Derashot HaRan: Drush No. 1)

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“The people spoke against Elokim and Moshe: ‘Why did you bring us up from Egypt to die in this Wilderness, for there is no food and no water, and our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food?’ Hashem sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit the people. A large multitude of Yisrael died.” (21:5-6)

R' Dov Meir Rubman z"l (rosh yeshiva in Vilkomir, Lithuania and Haifa, Israel; died 1967) asks: How is it possible that, after witnessing Korach's fate and after seeing Moshe Rabbeinu draw water from a rock, Bnei Yisrael complained--and against G-d, no less?!

He answers: There is no rational explanation for their behavior. A thinking person could not have acted as they did. However, Bnei Yisrael were not behaving rationally at that moment. Instead, they saw their thirsty children and their thirsty animals, and they panicked.

Then why did they deserve to be punished? R' Rubman explains: Moshe Rabbeinu must have been as thirsty as everyone else, but he did not complain. He understood that Hashem is always present and that Hashem can supply water in an instant. Thus, Moshe felt as if he had water; he just could not drink it at the moment. This is how all of Bnei Yisrael were expected to have felt after they experienced the miracles that they experienced. (Zichron Meir)

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from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Sun, Jun 21, 2015 at 11:10 AM subject: This is the way we wash our hands

**This is the way we wash our hands By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Question #1: Cup after restroom? “Do I need to use a cup when I wash upon leaving the restroom?”

Question #2: Netilah review “Could you please review the basic laws of netilah yadayim?”

Question #3: Lost count “Why do we wash our hands sometimes once, sometimes twice and sometimes three times?”

Answer: Parshas Chukas tells us that after the passing of Miriam, the Jews were without water. Many daily activities, as varied as arising in the morning, praying, eating bread, clipping nails and exiting the lavatory require that we wash our hands, either before or afterwards (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4:18, 92:7; Yoreh Deah 116:4, 5). The details of the laws that each of these washings requires vary, which people find confusing. Sometimes we are told to wash our hands alternately, and other times just the opposite. Sometimes we are told that the water may not have been used before, and other times there is no such requirement. Sometimes we require three washings, others only one; and still others do not even require water. This article will provide an overview explaining the basic various reasons and why there are, therefore, different halachic requirements, and then conclude with a brief guide to the instructions for the most complicated type of washing, the one required before eating bread.

Our first step to sort out this confusion is to categorize the different reasons why we wash under the following headings:

I. For hygiene

II. To remove ruach ra -- harmful spiritual influence Certain activities or situations cause a ruach ra, an impure spirit, that is removed by washing in a prescribed fashion.

III. For kedushah Whereas the aim of both categories mentioned thus far is to remove contaminants, either physical or spiritual, the purpose of other ablutions is to create sanctity. An example is the rinsing of hands and feet by the kohanim prior to performing the service in the Beis Hamikdash.

IV. For taharah Washing hands prior to eating bread has many special requirements, and this is because this mitzvah is for yet a fourth reason, as I will soon explain.

Reasons make differences Each of the different reasons for washing has its own laws. This explains why the requirements vary, as we will soon see.

Not mutually exclusive The four reasons that we have now learned are not mutually exclusive -- meaning that sometimes we wash our hands for several of these rationales. When this happens, the laws applicable for each reason must be met.

Here is one example: Cleansing one's hands after using the lavatory is required both for hygiene and because of ruach ra. I will soon demonstrate how this explains some of the halachos that apply to that particular washing.

Our next step is to understand the basic requirements of each type of washing and the differences that exist between them.

I. Hygiene Halachah requires that a person clean his hands when they are dirty, or when he has touched his shoes or the parts of the body that are sweaty or are usually covered. When cleaning is only because of hygiene and not for any other objective, several lenient halachic rulings apply that do not apply when washing for one of the other reasons. The most obvious difference is that washing for hygienic reasons does not require water. It is sufficient to clean the soiled area in any way that one chooses, such as by rubbing one's hands on a rough surface, by using alcohol or a disinfectant cleaning gel. The requirement is simply to insure that the dirt has been removed (Magen Avraham 92:5; Machatzis Hashekel 4:17; Kaf Hachayim 4:61). Similarly, washing for hygiene does not require cleaning hands a specific number of times.

Another lenience is that someone who will not be davening or studying Torah is not required to wash his hands immediately, but can clean them when it is convenient to do so (Mishnah Berurah 4:41).

On the other hand, there is a stringency that applies to washing for physical hygiene. Halachah prohibits reciting a brocha, praying or studying Torah until the dirt has been removed (Magen Avraham 227:2).

II. For ruach ra A second category of ablutions includes those performed to remove ruach ra, spiritual contaminants that may be harmful if not removed properly. These include: Washing after clipping fingernails or toenails, after giving or receiving a haircut, after leaving the lavatory or mikveh, after visiting a cemetery or attending a funeral.

As opposed to hygienic cleaning, washing to eliminate ruach ra requires using water (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4:18) and necessitates washing until the wrist (see Kaf Hachayim 4:61). Another stringency that applies when removing ruach ra is that one should wash one's hands as soon as possible, in order to purge the ruach ra without

delay (see Magen Avraham 4:18 and Pri Megadim; Elyah Rabbah 4:12; Kaf Hachayim 4:63). Yet another stringency is that one should be careful not to touch food without first washing away the ruach ra. However, if one did touch food prior to washing, the food may be eaten (Shu't Shevush Yaakov 2:105; Artzos Hachayim, Eretz Yehudah 4:4; Darchei Teshuvah 116:35).

On the other hand, there are a few lenient rulings that apply when one is washing only to remove ruach ra: One may recite brachos, pray or study Torah even though one is contaminated by ruach ra and has not yet had the opportunity to wash properly. A second leniency that applies is that, with the exception of washing negel vasser and those ablutions required from having had contact with meisim (after visiting a cemetery or attending a funeral), these washings do not require pouring on one's hands from a vessel (see Kaf Hachayim 4:61). If one does not have a vessel handy, he may wash negel vasser without one (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4:7 and commentaries).

More than one reason I mentioned above that after using the bathroom one washes both because of hygiene and because of ruach ra. Since each of these reasons has its own requirements, washing after using the lavatory carries both of them. For the reasons of hygiene, it is sufficient to wipe one's hands or use a gel sanitizer. However, this cleansing does not remove ruach ra. Therefore, if there is no water available, one may wipe or rub one's hands or use alcohol or gel sanitizer to clean them. This cleaning will allow someone to recite asher yatzar, daven, and learn Torah. Notwithstanding the fact that his body is still contaminated by a ruach ra that he should try to remove as soon as possible, this does not prevent him from reciting brachos, praying or studying Torah. Someone in this situation should wash his hands properly with water at his first opportunity.

Different levels of ruach ra There are different varieties of ruach ra, some more potent than others. Therefore, some activities require pouring water three times on each hand, whereas others require only one pouring on each hand (Seder Hayom, quoted by Kaf Hachayim 4:61). Clipping nails, and giving or receiving a haircut involve a lighter ruach ra that requires only one washing (Elyah Rabbah 4:12). On the other hand, after leaving the lavatory or mikveh, visiting a cemetery or attending a funeral one should wash each hand three times. When washing one's hands more than one time to remove ruach ra, one should wash them alternately – first the right hand, then the left, then the right, and so on until each hand has been washed three times (Ben Ish Chai, Tolados 16; Kaf Hachayim 4:62). Both right-handed and left-handed people should follow this procedure (Mishnah Berurah 4:22).

Even when the type of ruach ra requires that we wash hands three times, one who is able to wash his hands only once may touch food afterwards (Biur Halachah 4:2 s.v. yedakdeik).

By the way, a person who clips someone else's nails does not need to wash his hands (Kaf Hachayim 4:92). However, the person whose nails were clipped must wash his hands. Therefore, someone who clips the nails of a child who is old enough to touch food should wash the child's hands afterwards (Kaf Hachayim 4:92). A barber needs to wash his hands after giving a haircut, since he touches people's hair (Kaf Hachayim 4:92).

III. For reasons of kedushah Yet another reason for washing is to create more kedushah, similar to the kohanim washing their hands and feet before performing the service in the Beis Hamikdash (see Ramban, Shemos 30:17). For example, the kohein washes his hands until his wrists before duchening. Another activity that requires washing because of kedushah is davening shemoneh esrei (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 233:2). The laws germane both to washing before eating and washing prior to bentsching are also because of kedushah, although in both instances there are other reasons to require these ablutions.

Brocha for washing Whereas washing for hygiene or to remove ruach ra never requires a brocha, some washing performed because of kedushah does require a brocha.

I mentioned before that some activities require washing for more than one reason. Washing negel vasser in the morning is one such activity, which is required for three different reasons:

Hygiene: When a person is sleeping, he touches private and sweaty parts of his body.

To remove ruach ra: According to the Zohar (Parshas Vayeishev), a ruach ra descends upon a person while he sleeps and remains on his hands when he wakes up. Washing his hands three times removes it.

For kedushah: Every morning a person is like a kohein in the Beis Hamikdash who must wash from the Holy Laver (the kiyor) before beginning the daily service (Shu't Rashba #191).

Because we wash negel vasser for all three reasons, the rules of negel vasser include stringencies from each of the categories.

Since the washing is for hygiene, one may not study Torah or recite prayers or blessings before washing.

Since it is to remove ruach ra, one should wash as soon as he can.

Since it is for kedushah, one recites a brocha upon this washing!

IV. Washing for bread I am categorizing netilas yadayim, washing prior to eating bread, as a fourth category, because its laws are so different from the rest of the washings. For example, this washing has special instructions as to what type of water may be used, and requires that one use a vessel and dry one's hands afterwards.

In the days of Shlomoh Hamelech, our Sages created a special mitzvah that we wash our hands in a very specific way prior to eating bread. There are two reasons for this takkanah:

1. Chazal required that we wash hands in a very specific way prior to eating or handling terumah. To make certain that this takkanah was observed correctly, they extended the requirement to anytime a person eats bread.

2. To create increased sanctity prior to eating our daily bread.

The reason Chazal required washing hands before handling terumah is because of a concept called tumas yadayim. Handling different items contaminates the hands to the extent that should they touch terumah, eating the terumah would be prohibited. This tumah is removed by washing one's hands in a prescribed way. A minimum of a revi'is of water must be used, and must be poured by a person from an intact vessel meant for holding liquid. The entire hand that must be washed should be rinsed the first time one pours water onto the hand. If the water poured the first time did not wash the entire hand, one must dry the hand thoroughly and begin the procedure again.

With this overview, let us now study the proper procedure for netilas yadayim.

Chatzitzah, intervening substances Prior to washing one's hands, one should check that there are no intervening substances adhering to his hands. Any item that one prefers to remove, such as dough under one's nails, will invalidate the netilas yadayim if it is not removed beforehand (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 161:1 and Mishnah Berurah 161:1).

Unused water The water used for netilas yadayim must not have been previously used. For example, water that was used to rinse clothes or dishes or to cool off a baby bottle may not be used afterwards for netilas yadayim (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 160:2). Similarly, water kept in a basin that a workman used to cool off his tools may not be used for netilas yadayim (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 160:3).

Potable Although water used for netilas yadayim does not have to be drinkable, one may not use water that is so salty, bitter or malodorous that a dog would not drink it (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 160:9).

Vessel Netilas yadayim must be poured from a vessel large enough to hold at least a revi'is, approximately three ounces of liquid (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 159:1). A cup that is cracked or leaky may not be used (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 159:1). One may also not use a cap or other item that is not meant to hold water, even if, physically, it can (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 159:4).

Optimally, one should pour a revi'is of water on one's hand each time he washes. As a rule, the Gemara advises using water generously when pouring for netilas yadayim, noting that this is a segulah to avoid poverty (Shabbos 62b).

Koach gavra Washing for netilas yadayim requires that the water be poured over one's hands by a person. This is called koach gavra, literally, the direct force of a person. Turning on a faucet and placing one's hands under the water does not accomplish netilas yadayim for two reasons. First of all, the water did not fall from a vessel, and, second of all, the water was not poured directly by a person.

Wrist or knuckles? The early authorities dispute whether netilas yadayim requires washing until the wrist or only until the knuckles. The Shulchan Aruch rules that one should preferably wash until the wrist (Orach Chayim 161:3). This means that when pouring water for the first time onto one's hand, one must be careful to pour in such a way that every part of the hand gets wet.

Positioning the hands The Gemara (Sotah 4b) requires that one hold one's hands upright, fingers aloft, while washing netilas yadayim. There are numerous reasons mentioned in halachic authorities for these requirements. Explaining them all and the differences in halachah that result would take us beyond the scope of our article, so I will suffice by saying the following:

According to almost all opinions, holding the fingers upright while washing is not required when someone uses at least a revi'is of water and is careful that the water touches every part of his hand. Since most halachically concerned people wash their hands this way, I will leave the details of this discussion for another time.

It is preferred that even someone who washed his hands the way we just described should pour water onto his hands a second time. One should pour twice on one's right hand, and then twice on one's left hand (Chayei Odom 40:1; Mishnah Berurah 162:21). (This contrasts with washing because of ruach ra, where we wash our hands alternatively, as we learned above.) If a hand was washed with less than a revi'is of water, then halachah requires that one wash the hand a second time (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 162:2).

Rubbing hands together After washing the hands, one should rub one's hands together (Tosefta, Yadayim 1:2). This is done in case there is some dirt on them that has not already been removed (Rema, Orach Chayim 162:2, as explained by the Bach). This

last step is not essential (Mishnah Berurah 162:24). One should be careful not to rub one's hands together until both hands have been properly washed.

**Drying** The Gemara teaches that one's hands must be wiped dry after washing (Sotah 4b).

**Washing wet hands** Must one's hands be completely dry before you begin washing netilas yadayim? The authorities dispute what the halachah is in this case.

As we learned above, someone who, when pouring water for the first time, rinsed only part of his hand, must dry his hand thoroughly and begin the procedure over. The authorities dispute whether one must always have dry hands when beginning netilas yadayim or whether one may perform netilas yadayim even though his hands are wet or the handle of the cup is wet. According to the Magen Avraham (162:10) and the Mishnah Berurah (162:27), one may begin washing netilas yadayim, even though one's hands are wet. The Chazon Ish (Orach Chayim 24:20) disagrees, contending that one's hands must be dry when one begins washing netilas yadayim. Therefore, the handle of the cup must also be dry or, alternatively, one may grip the handle of the cup with a towel or some other item that keeps his hands dry until he washes netilas yadayim.

**Optimal washing** Based on what we have learned, we can now present the optimal way to wash one's hands prior to eating bread.

First one should check that one's hands are clean. If they are not, he should clean them, and, according to the Chazon Ish, dry them. According to the Chazon Ish, the handle of the cup and the faucet handle must be dry, or one should be careful to touch the handles using something that will keep the hands dry.

One should pour twice over all parts of one's right hand, and then pour twice over all parts of one's left hand. The first pouring on each hand should be with at least a revi'is of water. One should use water generously and rub the hands together after washing. One then recites the brocha of al netilas yadayim prior to drying one's hands.

**Conclusion** The Gemara teaches that the rabbinic laws are dearer to Hashem than the Torah laws. This helps explain why there is such a vast halachic literature concerning this particular mitzvah.

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