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CHUKAS
JULY 2, 2025 | 6 TAMUZ 5785

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COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

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CHOSHEN MISHPAT SHIUR WITH RABBI HERSHEL ROSENFELD SUNDAY AT 11:30 AM

HACHANA L'SHABBOS SHIUR WEDNESDAY NIGHTS AT 9:45PM

בית מדרש
אור חיים

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Thank you to our Gabbaim Ephrayim Yurowitz and Tzvi Blech

Shabbos Zmanim

CANDLE LIGHTING **8:13 PM**

EARLY FRIDAY MINCHA: 1:30 PM & every 15 minutes until 4:30 PM | 18 Main

FRIDAY NIGHT MINCHA/KABALLAS SHABBOS

18 Main	20 Upstairs Chabad	Shkiya
7:10 PM	8:18 PM	8:31 PM

SHABBOS

	20 Upstairs- Vasikin	18 Main- Ashkenaz	Tent א	20 Upstairs - Chabad	in 18 Main
SHACHRIS	4:51 AM	8:00 AM	9:15 AM	10:00 AM	10:30 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	Pirchei	18 Main Mincha	Shkiya	Tent א Maariv :40	18 Main Maariv :50
	2:00 PM	8:00 PM	8:31 PM	9:11 PM	9:21 PM

LATE MAARIV MOTZEI SHABBOS: 10:00 PM & every 15 minutes until 12:30 AM | 18 Main

Weekday Zmanim

SHACHRIS:
VASIKIN

EVERY 15 MIN
from 6:15 AM until a half hour before chatzos

MINCHA:
MINCHA GEDOLA

EVERY 15 MIN. until an hour before shkia

EVERY 5 MIN. from an hour before shkia until 60

12 MIN. BEFORE PLAG

12 MIN. BEFORE SHKIA

MAARIV:
PLAG

EVERY 5 MIN. from shkia until 72

EVERY 10 MIN. From 72 until 11:00 P.M.

EVERY 15 MIN. From 11:00 .PM. to 2:00 A.M.

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בית מדרש אור חיים
BAIS MEDRASH OHR CHAIM

RABBI DANIEL COREN

The Month of Tammuz

Parshas Chukas begins with the words זאת חוקת התורה. Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz, in his beautiful essays, develops the idea that keeping the Torah should always have the aspect of *chok*, meaning whether we understand a *mitzvah* or we don't, we are always ready to do the will of our Creator, simply because we love Him and feel this is the right thing to do. This idea also connects to the significance of this month, Tammuz.

The *Bnai Yissachar* notes that the *passuk* with the permutation of Hashem's name that corresponds to the month of Tammuz is וכל זה איננו שווה לי. The last letters of the last four words spell out Hashem's name, but in reverse. The name of Hashem is reversed because the month of Tammuz represents *din*, judgment. This *passuk* is from *Megilas Esther*, describing our arch enemy Haman, who had everything except that one Jew named Mordechai refused to bow down to him. Because of this, Haman ended up losing everything. The Gemara in *Chullin* connects the sin of Adam Harishon to Haman's name: המן העץ. The connection is obvious. Adam Harishon also had everything except one tree whose fruit he was forbidden to eat (until Shabbos), and he lost everything because he didn't hold back.

When we explored the depth of the sin of the spies in *Parshas Shlach*, we understood that the main source of the spies' rebellion against Hashem was the lack of *emunah* and *bitachon* that everything we have ultimately is a gift from Hashem. When we appreciate everything that Hashem gives us, we are inspired to do everything that Hashem tells us to do.

May we be *zoche* to do the will of Hashem and merit that the fast days coming up will ultimately be *yomim tovim*.

SHIUR SCHEDULE

SEMICHAS CHAVER SHIUR in R' Coren's office every Wednesday at 9:00 PM
Hachana L'Shabbos Shiur in 20 Upstairs every Wednesday at 9:45 PM

RABBI ZEV LEFF

A Taste and a Reason

The Mishnah (*Berachos* 33b) rules that one who says, "As Your mercies, G-d, devolve on the mother bird and its nest, so too, have mercy on us," must be silenced. The Talmud explains that the requirement of sending away the mother bird prior to taking her eggs is solely a Divine decree, not based on the desire to be merciful to the mother bird, as the forbidden prayer would seem to imply. Yet the Sages themselves say (*Devarim Rabba* 6:1): "...So, too, G-d's mercy extends to the birds, as it says, 'When you discover a bird's nest... send away the mother...' "

To resolve this contradiction, we must distinguish between a taste and a reason. If we were asked why we eat, we would answer that we must eat in order to live. If questioned further why we eat bread and not stones, we might refer to the necessary nutrients available in bread but not in stones. But if asked why human beings need these nutrients or why we are capable of extracting needed minerals from bread and not rocks, we could say nothing more than that is how G-d created the world, and the answer lies exclusively in His mind.

Even though we eat to stay alive, G-d created the world in such a way that our food also has a pleasing taste and aroma. But that taste should never be confused with our *reason* for eating. Even if our taste buds were destroyed and we could not taste our food, we would still have to eat. And if we let our taste buds guide our choice of foods, we might soon die of malnutrition.

The *mitzvot* are the spiritual nourishment of our soul. Why or how a particular *mitzvah* nourishes our soul we cannot know any more than why G-d created bodies that require certain nutrients. But G-d wanted the *mitzvot* to be palatable to us, so he infused them with taste – ideas and lessons – that we can understand. We must never confuse, however, the lessons of the *mitzvot* with their underlying reasons. Thus, all the extensive literature explaining the *mitzvot* always refers to these explanations as ta'amei *mitzvot*, literally "the tastes of the *mitzvot*."

In this light, the *Meiri* explains the verse, "For it is a *chok* for Israel, a *mishpat* to the G-d of Jacob" (Psalms 81:5). For us, all *mitzvot* are ultimately *chukim*, unfathomable decrees. But to G-d, they are all *mishpatim*, based on an overall plan known only to the Divine Mind.

SUPERSEDES HUMAN RECKONING

If one entreats G-d, Who has mercy on the birds, to similarly have mercy on us, that entreaty reflects his own determination that he understands the reason for the *mitzvah* from G-d's perspective. That is a mistake. We can never know why G-d decreed a particular *mitzvah*. But to learn from the *mitzvah* a lesson of mercy as an enhancement to our performance of the *mitzvah* is perfectly acceptable. That is the intent of the Sages in the *Midrash* mentioned above.

All *mitzvot* are intrinsically *chukim*, unfathomable Divine decrees. With respect to some, even the ta'am is obscure, and they are categorized as *chukim*, and in some, the *ta'am* is more easily discerned, and they are called *mishpatim*.

Para adumah is called *chukat haTorah*, a law of the Torah, and not *chukat haparah*, the law of the red heifer, because it demonstrates in the clearest fashion that the entire Torah is based on a Divine understanding beyond our ability to fathom. Only when we base our performance of *mitzvot* on submission to the decree of the Creator will they be performed with perfection.

RABBI YY JACOBSON

Anxiety as an Opportunity
PART I

There is a strange biblical episode in this week's portion of *Chukas*.

When poisonous snakes attack the Jews in the desert, G-d instructs Moses to fashion a special healing instrument: a pole topped with the form of a snake. Moses sculptures a snake of copper and duly places it on top of a pole. Those who had been afflicted by the snake bite would gaze on the serpentine image on the pole and be cured.

According to some historians, this was the forerunner of the caduceus, the snake-entwined rod that is today the emblem of the medical profession.

Yet the question is obvious: What was the point of placing a snake on top of the pole to cure the Jews who were bitten? If it was G-d who was healing them miraculously, why the need to look up at a copper snake atop a pole?

The question is raised in the Talmud:

"But is the snake capable of determining life and death?!" the Talmud asks. And the answer is this: "Rather, when Israel would gaze upward and bind their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they would be healed; and if not, they would perish." Fixing their eyes on the snake alone would not yield any cure. It was looking upward toward G-d, it was the relationship with G-d, that brought the cure. But if so, why bother to carve out a copper snake in the first place, which can only make people believe that it is the copper snake that is the cause of healing?

In fact, this is exactly what occurred. The copper snake that Moses made was preserved for centuries. In the passage of time, however, its meaning became distorted, and people began to say that the snake possessed powers of its own. When it reached the point of becoming an image of idolatry, the Jewish King Hezekiah (in the sixth century BCE) destroyed the copper snake fashioned by Moses, and that was the end of that special copper snake.

Which only reinforces the question: Why ask people to look up at a man-made snake that can lead down the path to a theological error of deifying it?

There is another question. The snake was the reptile that caused the harm in the first place. Healing, it would seem, would come from staying far away from serpents. Why in this case was the remedy born from gazing at the very venomous creature that caused the damage to begin with?

A Tale of Two Snakes

The snake in the biblical story - as all biblical stories capturing the timeless journeys of the human psyche - is also a metaphor for all of the "snakes" in our lives. Have you ever been bitten by a "venomous snake"? Poisoned by harmful people, burnt by life, or by abusive situations? Have you ever been crushed by a clueless principal, a manipulative boss, a deceiving partner, a toxic relationship? Were you ever back-stabbed by people you trusted? Is your anxiety killing you? Are you weary and demoralized by your life experience?

What is the deeper meaning of suffering? And how do some people know how to accept affliction with love and grace?

These are good questions that cannot be answered easily, if at all. But one perspective is presented in the story of the serpent. G-d tells Moses: "Make a serpent and place it on a pole. Whoever gets bitten should look at it, and he will live." The key to healing, the Torah suggests, is not by fleeing the cause of the suffering but by gazing at it. Don't run from the snake; look at it. Because deep inside the challenge, you will find the cure. Deep inside the pain, you will find the healing light.

But there is one qualification: you must look up to the snake; you must peer into the reality of the snake above, on top of the elevated pole, not at the serpent crawling here below.

To be continued…

SHIUR SCHEDULE

MONDAY & THURSDAY Chassidus Shiur 7:45 AM (18 Main) · **TUESDAY** Womens Shiur 9:30 AM (84 Viola Rd)
SHABBOS Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)) · **Morning 8:40 AM** (20 Upstairs) | **After Davening 12:00 PM** (20 Upstairs)
PLEASE NOTE: Rabbi Jacobson's Shabbos morning shiur will now begin at 8:40 AM, followed by the Minyan at 10:00 AM.

UFARATZTA RABBI SHALOM BER MUNITZ

Yud Beis Tammuz

The Neis of Yud Bais Tammuz 5687/1927 Started 17 Years Earlier

In early 1910, the Rebbe Rashab* called in five of his *chassidim*.

The Rebbe Rashab said to Reb Zalman Havlin, "I am sending you to Eretz Yisroel to revive Chabad there."

The Rebbe said that people will come to Eretz Yisroel in droves. The *chassidim* did not understand the magnitude of this statement at that moment.

The Rebbe sent three of the other chassidim to places in Russia where there were many Jews at that time.

The Rebbe Rashab said to the youngest of them, the Radam, Reb David Meir Rabbinowitz, "I am sending you to Boston in America. Your son will save the life of my son."

The Radam relocated his family to Boston.

Seventeen years later, when the RaYYatz* was arrested, the Radam, Harav Dovid Meir Rabbinowitz, got a two-word telegram from the RaYYatz's daughter: *Rebbe arestirt* [in Yiddish: the Rebbe was arrested].

Rabbi Rabbinowitz understood the grave danger the Rebbe RaYYatz was in from the Russian Communist regime.

-- Continued with the hishtadlus here in America by the Robbinowitz family –

==== Told by the shliach in Springfield, Massachusetts, Harav David Edelman.

*Rashab: Admur Shalom DovBer, 5th Chabad Rebbe

*RaYYatz Admur Yosef Yitzchok, 6th Chaad Rebbe, only son of the Rebbe Rashab

Yud Beis Tammuz: The Rebbe RaYYatz's birthday and the day he was freed from prison. On the 15th of *Sivan*, the Rebbe was arrested, officially, for counter-revolutionary activities. [What he was really doing was running 600 underground *yeshivos* plus anything to keep the Jewish faith alive, which was illegal according to the Russian constitution.] Eleven other clergymen of different faiths were arrested and killed that day. The Rebbe was sentenced to capital punishment. On *gimmel Tammuz*, the sentence was commuted to three years in exile in far-off Kostroma. Two weeks after he came to Kostroma, on *yud beis Tammuz,* the Rebbe was told that he was totally free to go. On *yud gimel Tammuz*, the Rebbe RaYYatz left for home.

RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER

Bircas Eirusin – Who Recites the Brocha?

We have seen different opinions as to the status of the *brocha* we make before the *kiddushin*. According to the Rambam, it is a *bircas hamitzvos*, a *brocha* recited before performing the *mitzvah* of getting married. According to the Rosh, the *Bircas Eirusin* is a *bircas ha'shvach*, a *brocha* recited praising Hashem for a Jewish marriage. We will now explore some of the *nafka minos*, the *halachic* differences between the two perspectives.

Is the brocha recited on behalf of the *chosson?*

As we know, the *minhag* is that the *mesader kiddushin*, the one officiating at the wedding, is the one who recites the *Bircas ha'Eirusin*. This needs to be explained. Why is he the one to recite the *brocha*?

According to the *Rosh*, that it is a *bircas ha'shvach*, this is logical. Since it is a *brocha* of praising Hashem upon this great occasion, it is not necessarily the *chosson* per se who must recite the *brocha*. As the *Taz* (*Y"D* 1:16) explains, since the *brocha* is a general praise to Hashem and not on the *mitzvah* performance, it can be recited by any of the onlookers, such as the *mesader kiddushin*. This is also the opinion of the *Be'er Sheva*.

On the other hand, if it is a *bircas hamitzvah*, a *brocha* recited on the performance of the *mitzvah* of *kiddushin*, why is the *mesader kiddushin* the one to recite the *brocha* and not the *chosson*, who is performing the *mitzvah*? Indeed, the Rambam himself writes that since it is a *brocha* for performing a *mitzvah*, the *chosson* should be the one to recite the *brocha*.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (34:1) writes that there are different opinions as to who should recite the *brocha*: the *chosson* or the *mesader kiddushin*. The *Rama* adds that the prevalent *minhag* is for it to be recited by someone else, not the *chosson*. The *Beis Shmuel* (34:2) quotes the *P'risha*, who explains that the reason for this *minhag* is not to embarrass the *chosson*, just in case he does not know how to recite the *brocha* properly. That being the case, if there is no one else who can recite the *brocha*, the *chosson* can recite the *brocha* himself.

Similarly, the *Taz* (34:1) quotes the *Maharshal*, who uses the same reasoning. He points to a precedent in regards to *krias haTorah*, where the *baal korei* always reads, just in case the person getting an *aliyah* doesn't know how to read properly.

This was the custom of many *gedolim*, including the *Imrei Emes* (*Micht'vei Torah* 58) and the Brisker Rav (quoted in *Apiryon Shlomo* 83:1). When reciting the *brocha*, they would tell the *chosson* to have in mind to be *yotzei* from their recitation. This is based on the assumption that it is a *bircas hamitzvah*. If it is a *bircas ha'shvach*, anyone can recite the *brocha*, and it would be unnecessary to recite it on behalf of the *chosson*.

The *B'tzeil Hachachma* (2:71), however, asserts that even if it is a *bircas ha'shvach*, it is the *chosson* who has the requirement to praise Hashem and not the bystanders. Thus, according to this viewpoint, even if it is a *bircas ha'shvach*, the *mesader kiddushin* would have to have in mind to recite the *brocha* on behalf of the *chosson*.

Summary

In conclusion, we have a possible *nafka mina*. If *Bircas Eirusin* is a *bircas hamitzvah*, the *mesader kiddushin* is reciting the *brocha* on behalf of the *chosson*, and he must have in mind to recite it for him. But if it is a *bircas ha'shvach*, it is possible that it is a *brocha* that anyone can recite, and it would be unnecessary to recite it on behalf of the *chosson*.

SHIUR SCHEDULE

KOLLEL BOKER 7:00-8:00AM
Chavrusa learning - Gemara
Currently: מסכת יומא
Friday - Shuirim Beinyonei Dyoma and relevant topics

NIGHT KOLLEL 8:15-9:45PM
Chavrusa learning - Halacha
Currently : הלכות כיבוד אב ואם

SHIURIM BY ROSH KOLLEL & FEATURED GUEST SPEAKERS
Daf Yomi | 8:45-9:45 PM
Mishna Yomis | 8:45-9:00 PM
Zera Shimshon Shiur | 8:15-9:00 PM

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RABBI YAKOV YOSEF SCHECHTER

Gan HaTorah

THE LUCHOS WERE WRITTEN ON MOSHE RABBEINU'S HANDS

ויאמר ד' אל משה ואל אהרן יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל, לכן לא תביאו את הקהל הזה אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם"

"Hakodosh Boruch Hu told Moshe and Aharon that because they did not believe in Him to sanctify Him in the eyes of Klal Yisroel, therefore you will not bring Klal Yisroel to the Land which I have given them." Hashem told Moshe and Aharon to take a staff with them and go *speak* to a rock to make water come out of it. The *posuk* tells us that Moshe and Aharon did not believe in Hashem. This *posuk* is quite perplexing, for how could it be that the great Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Hakohen did not believe in Hashem?

Moshe came down from *Shamayim* with the *luchos* in his hands. The *posuk* stresses that they were in Moshe's hands because the *luchos* were actually written on Moshe Rabbeinu's hands. The essence of Moshe was Torah. *Shemos* 17:12 "וידי משה כבדים ויקחו אבן וישימו תחתיו." Moshe's hands became heavy, and he could no longer hold the *luchos*. So, they placed stones underneath to relocate the *luchos* from his hands to the stones. This happened by the war with Amalek when Klal Yisroel weakened themselves from the Torah. Klal Yisroel were no longer *zoche* that the *luchos* should be written on Moshe's hands. The *luchos* were therefore transferred to stone. (רמ"ע מפאנו)

The Torah tells us that Moshe hit the rock twice. Why do we need to know how many times he hit the rock? Why was Aharon punished for hitting the rock if he was not the one to hit it? We learn from here that one who sees another doing an *aveira* and does not try to stop him and just stands idle is also punishable. The first time that Moshe hit the rock, how was Aharon to know that Moshe was going to hit it? After he hit the rock the first time, Aharon should have said something. The *posuk* tells us that Moshe hit the rock twice to let us know that Aharon was culpable as well. Letting Moshe hit the rock the second time was Aharon's *aveira*. (גן רוה)

It says in the תיקוני זוהר "משה שקול כנגד כל ישראל וכולל את כל נשמותיהם". Moshe Rabbeinu was the equivalent of the entire Klal Yisroel. A part of every *neshama* of each person in Klal Yisroel was in Moshe Rabbeinu.

Moshe was a representation of Klal Yisroel. Moshe's entire focus was to fulfill the Will of Hashem. Chazal tell us that had Moshe gone into Eretz Yisroel, the Bais Hamikdash would never have been destroyed. However, Klal Yisroel were not worthy of that yet. Perhaps the *posuk* tells us that Moshe raised his hand to hit the rock to tell us that it was not really Moshe who wanted to go against the Will of Hashem. Just as Moshe's hands became heavy when Klal Yisroel were not worthy, and therefore, the *luchos* were transferred from his hands to stone, so too, over here, Moshe's hand raised itself and hit the rock. It was Klal Yisroel who were not worthy and did not believe in Hashem, and therefore, Moshe and Aharon were unable to lead Klal Yisroel into Eretz Yisroel.

May we be *zoche* speedily in our days to have Moshe and Aharon lead us into Eretz Yisroel for the *Geulah Shlaima*.

הרב בן ציון סנה

פרה אדומה

שאלה:

חומש ויקרא דן בקורבנות טומאה וטהרה, ובמדבר בכל לקחי בני-ישראל במדבר ללימוד לדורות. אם כן, מה עניין פרה אדומה לחומש במדבר? היה לה להיות בחומש ויקרא.

תירוץ:

פרשה זו נכתבה דווקא כאן כתגובה לפרשה הקודמת- קורח. קורח כפר במשה והיה ה"רפורמי" הראשון, וטען כי ה' נתן את התורה אבל רק ראשי פרקים, ואת הפרטים משה הוסיף מדעתו. ה' ציווה לבנות את המשכן אבל למנות את אהרן – משה מדעתו מינה.

הראיה לדבריו:

אילו התורה היתה כולה מפי ה' הרי לא היו מצוות שאינן נתפסות בשכל האדם. וכך הלביש את 250 איש בציצית שכולה תכלת ושאל את משה אם חוט אחד פוטר טלית שלמה. טלית שכולה תכלת אינו דין שתפטור את עצמה?! בכך התריס כנגד משה, שדברים אלו לא נצטווית עליהם ומלבך אתה בודה אותם.

אבל קרח לא השכיל להבין שבעצם זה שאינו מבין זוהי ההוכחה שמשה קיבל זאת כך, ויתרה מזו – אם משה היה ממציא זאת כשבאו אליו, היה מיד קולט את התכנון ואומר שטלית כזו פטורה היא!...

התיקון לקרח הוא פרה אדומה

אך כיון שמשה קיבל זאת כך משמיים הוא ענה לקרח – בין אם הדבר מובן ובין אם לא! ומכיוון שקרח לגלג וכתוב "ובני קרח לא מתו", היינו שיתכן שנשאר משהו בספק בליבותיהם של השומעים, לכן באה פרשת פרה אדומה שנבין שטעמי המצוות למעלה משכלנו והבנתנו.

"כי לא דרככם דרכי נאום ה'", ולמרות שקרח צדיק היה ("צדי-**ק** כתמ-**ר** יפר-**ח**" ס"ת קרח) לא הצליח להשיג את טעמי המצוות.

טענתו דומה לסיפור הבא:

נהג משאית בא לרב ושאל האם הוא צריך לומר פסוקי דזימרה באם גמר את כל ספר התהילים לפני התפילה?

חייך הרב וענה לו: אם יבקשו ממך לקחת ולהוביל מיכלי דלק, תסכים?

"בוודאי" – ענה האיש

ולפני הנסיעה תמלא את מיכל הדלק? – הקשה הרב

"ודאי, אחרת המשאית לא תיסע..." – ענה בביטחון

אבל המשאית גדושה חביות דלק?! שאל הרב.

ענה נהג המשאית: "אוויי... באמת... אין קשר ביניהם".

לרגע זה חיכה הרב ואמר: "גם אין קשר בין התהילים שקראת לפסוקי דזימרה בתפילה"...

כן הוא בטעות קרח, אין קשר בין חוט התכלת לטלית כולה...

SHIUR SCHEDULE

שיעור קצר בעניני דיומא
באידיש ועברית אחרי ותיקין ב20 upstairs

RABBI YISSACHER FRAND

THE DEATH OF AHARON: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The *pasuk* says, "And Aharon shall be brought to his people, for he shall not enter the Land that I have given to the Children of Israel…" [*Bamidbar* 20:24] The *Sefas Emes* asks a very simple question here: If his time to die had not come yet, just because he was not able to enter the Land, is that a reason to diminish his lifespan? If it is not the time for him to die, he should not die. On the other hand, if his pre-destined time to die had already arrived, why was it necessary for the Torah to link his death with his not being able to enter the Land? What does this *pasuk* mean?

The *Sefas Emes* interprets this based on a basic concept: The length of time we live in this world is not pre-determined to be X number of days or years. We live in this world until the time we complete our assigned mission. When we complete our mission, we leave this world. Some people take 80 years to complete their mission. They live until 80. The *Rama* (Rav Moshe Isserles) died when he was 33 years old. Apparently, he completed his mission by the time he was that age. He wrote 33 sefarim. He died on the 33rd day of the Omer. He only needed 33 years.

The *Sefas Emes* explains that Moshe and Aharon asked to enter Eretz Yisroel so that they would be able to fulfill *mitzvos* that were Land-dependent. [*Sotah* 14a] In other words, they felt "Our mission in this world is not finished yet; we have not been able to fulfill the *mitzvos ha'teluyos b'aretz*." The Almighty told them, "I have other plans."

According to the approach of the *Sefas Emes*, if Aharon's mission included going into *Eretz Yisrael*, he would not have died yet because he would not have completed his spiritual mission in life, which included fulfillment of the *mitzvos* of *terumos* and *ma'asros*, etc. He was a *kohen* who never ate *terumah* in his life. The Torah therefore says, "He will die now because he is not going to enter…," meaning that entering *Eretz Yisrael* and fulfilling the special *mitzvos* there was not part of his life's spiritual mission. Perhaps that mission was removed from him as some kind of punishment for the sin of *Mei Merivah*, but ultimately, his time to die came because he was not going to enter the Land, and his mission in life was already complete.

A friend of mine, who unfortunately died recently, told me a rather chilling statement before he died. He said, "We go into the supermarket and buy a quart of milk or a pound of cream cheese, and we check its expiration date. After that, it is not good anymore." He told me, "We all have expiration dates printed on our foreheads. We just do not see the expiration date, but it is there." That expiration date is dependent on when we complete our mission in life. When we complete our mission, we leave this world.

"…Because he will not enter…" Aharon is not going to go into *Eretz Yisrael* because the Land-dependent *mitzvos* were **not** part of his life's mission. If so, that is why "Aharon died on *Hor HaHor*."


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2:15 pm
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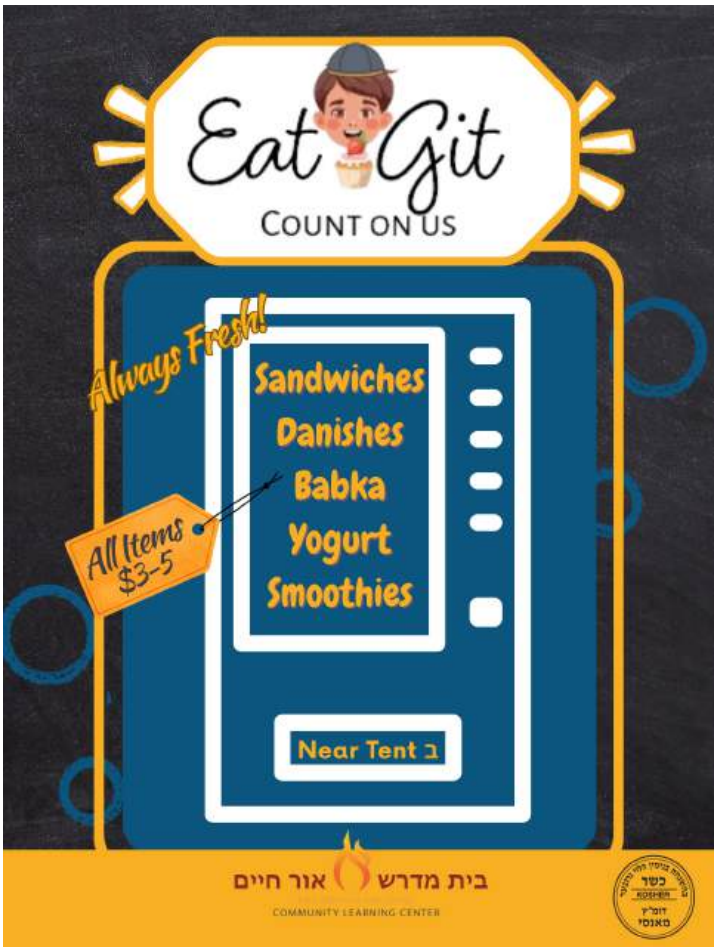
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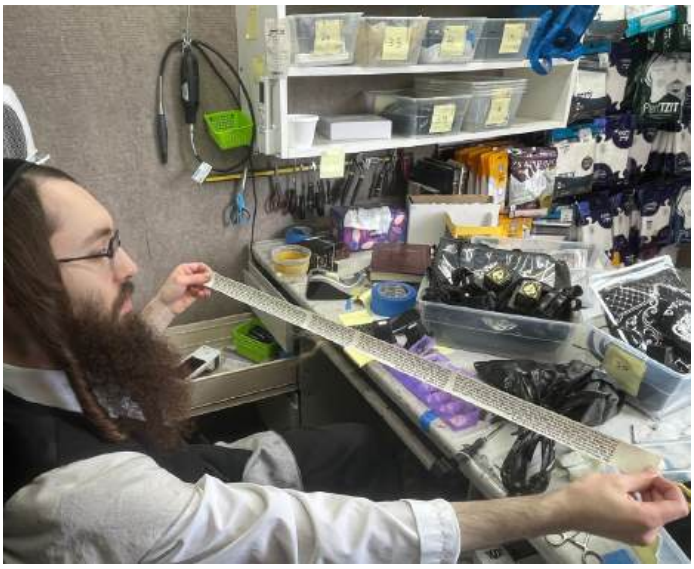

The Sofer Truck at Bais Medrash Ohr Chaim

Learning

RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS

Powerful Potions in Pleasurable Packaging

Parshat Chukat speaks about the *Para Aduma*, the red heifer used in the times of the Holy Temple. The ashes of the red heifer represented the ultimate paradox. The ashes *purified* someone who was impure, but they had the exact opposite effect as well. If someone was ritually pure, the ashes would make him *impure*.

King Solomon said that he was able to understand the logic behind all the Torah's commands, except for this one. So from here, Solomon deduced: While we can try to understand the reasons for the *mitzvot*, the bottom line is we do them "because G-d said so."

If that's true, we might ask: Why do so many of the mitzvot have an observable benefit, for instance, the weekly recharge that Shabbat provides or the lessons of discipline we gain from keeping kosher?

Actually, we could ask the same question about our physical health. For example, it is understandable that our bodies require Vitamin C, but why did G-d put Vitamin C into delicious oranges? Why didn't He simply make Vitamin C pills or put all the essential vitamins into something bland like oatmeal?

The answer is that G-d created us with a drive for meaning and satisfaction. So while Vitamin C is an essential requirement, G-d wanted to give it to us in the most pleasurable form possible. The orange flavor is a great reason to eat oranges, but not the *real* reason!

So, too, with our spiritual health. Although we enjoy the practical benefits of *mitzvot*, the real reason we observe them is "because G-d said so." In doing so, this raises our relationship with G-d to a much higher level of love and commitment. And ultimately, that is the best reason there could be.

RABBI SHRAGA FREEDMAN

Truth and Peace

How do we stand strong in our values without canceling those we disagree with?

Rav Lopiansky shared an extraordinary story quoted in the May 14, 2025, *Mishpacha* article titled "Where Peace and Truth Intersect" that he heard from Rav Aryeh Finkel *zt"l*.

Rav Aryeh Finkel once related a personal story from his own family. His mother was the stepdaughter of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. She told him that the *kana'im* of Yerushalayim once came to Rav Sonnenfeld with a complaint:

"You're sending mixed messages," they said. "On one hand, you've called Rav Kook an *apikorus*, and on the other hand, you show him great honor and treat him with such dignity."

Rav Sonnenfeld firmly responded, "*Chas v'shalom* that I would ever call Rav Kook an *apikorus*! What I said was that certain things he wrote are *apikorsus*, but he himself is the furthest thing from an *apikorus*."

What he meant to say, obviously, was that he held Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohein Kook in great esteem but argued strongly against particular points that he made. That is how we arrive at peace — by respecting the person we are disagreeing with.

This powerful story and the nuanced perspective Rav Lopiansky presents feel especially relevant in our time.

As *mekadshei Hashem,* we are called to walk the fine line between truth and peace. This can be very difficult.

The challenges of our generation are real. The temptations are strong. But we cannot afford to fight darkness with *bittul* or a spirit of "cancel culture." It weakens our ultimate mission.

The *Tomer Devorah* teaches that even when dealing with sinners, Hashem focuses on their good, and so should we. Seeing the positive in others is a Divine trait and one we are meant to emulate.

RABBI ARYEH CITRON ANASH.ORG

Being Nice Even in Difficult Times

The Talmud recounts that Rabbi Chiya's wife would constantly aggravate him. Nevertheless, whenever Rabbi Chiyah came across a delicacy, he would wrap some of it in his shawl and bring it home for his wife. When his nephew (Rav) asked him why he was so nice to his wife, who treated him so poorly, he explained that he appreciates what she does for him – that she protects him from sin and brings up their children in the Torah path.

Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (*Tomer Devorah*, Chapter 1) learns from this story that one must always consider the good that others do for them and show appreciation for it, even if those same people are sometimes inconsiderate and unkind.

The *Ben Ish Chai* (in *Ben Yehoyadah*) points out that Rabbi Chiya would wrap the delicacies in his shawl (*sudar*), which was the unique shawl worn by Torah scholars. He did this in order to allude to his wife that she had a share in all of his Torah learning through the assistance that she gave him, despite the fact that she would also aggravate him.

How to Cut Off a Tongue

The following story is told about Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid, the Jewish leader and advisor to Badis, King of the Berbers in Spain. There was a certain gentile who was jealous of Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid and would always curse him when he saw him. Once, Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid was walking with the king. When the man saw him passing his shop, he came out and began cursing Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid. Seeing how his advisor was being publicly shamed, the king instructed Shmuel HaNaggid to have the man's tongue cut off.

Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid looked into the matter and found out that this man was very poor. So he began sending him a weekly stipend to better his financial lot. Sometime later, the king was walking with Rabbi Shmuel again. When they passed this man's shop, he came out and began heaping blessings on Rabbi Shmuel. The king said to Rabbi Shmuel, "Didn't I tell you to have his tongue cut out?" Rabbi Shmuel replied, "That's exactly what I did. I cut out the tongue that uttered curses and replaced it with a tongue that utters blessings."

This lesson can be applied to one's marriage and relationships. The best way to turn a negative relationship into a positive one is by going out of one's way to help and do favors for the other person.

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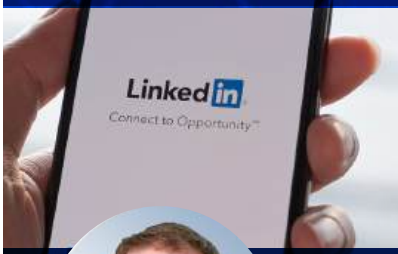

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Speak, Not Strike

Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice. (20:11)

When Moshe Rabbeinu struck the stone instead of speaking to it, as per his instructions from Hashem, his actions were considered to be sinful. As a result, he was not permitted to enter into Eretz Yisrael. The commentators offer a number of different explanations to shed light on Moshe's error. Rashi says that altering Hashem's command from "speaking" to "striking" was wrong. Other commentators attribute the error to his reaction, the derogatory manner in which he spoke to the people: *Shimu na hamorim*, "Listen, you rebellious ones/ fools." Whether the issue was becoming angry or referring to descendants of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, in such a disgraceful manner, our leader was held accountable.

The *Bas Ayin* coalesces both explanations. Moshe was acutely aware that Hashem had instructed him to speak to – not strike – the stone. Since he had spoken disrespectfully to the Jewish people, however, Moshe thought that he was no longer able to perform miracles using the words that emanated from his mouth. He had impugned the purity and integrity of his power of speech. Thus, he hit, rather than spoke.

This appears to be a rational reason for avoiding speaking. Why was Moshe held in contempt? The *Bas Ayin* explains that one should never despair of doing *teshuvah*. The power of repentance supersedes all; thus, it has the power to rectify any sin. Moshe could still have performed miracles with his words had he "repented." This was his error.

The reason that *Ibn Ezra* advances is especially noteworthy. He explains that the critique against Moshe and the nation was that, upon seeing water pour from the stone, their first reaction should have been to sing *shirah*, a song of praise, to Hashem. Instead, they drank and gave water to their animals. When we pray for a miracle and Hashem's response is positive, our initial response must be gratitude, not first enjoying the fruit and only then saying "Thank you." Our priority must always be acknowledging our Benefactor.

RABBI BINYAMIN YUDIN

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

The incident of *Mai Merivah* is one of the most obscure narratives of the Torah. The *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh* cites ten different positions, from Rashi to the *Maasei Hashem*, as to what the sin of Moshe was. Rashi (*Bamidbar* 20:12) explains the sin to have been Moshe's hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. The Ramban challenges Rashi by asking if Moshe was to only speak to the rock, why was he told to take the staff? Moreover, asks the *Netziv* (*Bamidbar* 20), we are not informed as to what exactly Moshe was to say to the rock.

The *Netziv* then suggests that *Mai Merivah* has to be viewed from the context in which it occurred. In his *hashlama* to the book of *Bamidbar*, he postulates that the book is one of transition from the time the Jewish people entered the *Midbar* to the time they were about to enter Eretz Yisroel. It is a book of transition from a state of *I'malah min hatevah* - from *mon*, *be'air*, and clouds of glory, to a state of *tevah*, a natural world of man working the land and dependent upon rain for his water supply.

It is for this reason, explains the *Netziv*, that thirty-nine years prior to *Mai Merivah*, at *Massah U'merivah* (*Shemos* 17:1-7), Hashem actually instructs Moshe to hit the rock. The *mateh*, the staff of Moshe, personifies a miraculous existence. We recount at the Pesach *seder* the verse from *Parshas Ki Tavo* (26:8): "Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand ... with signs and with wonders." The *Haggadah* explains, *"os-os, zu hamateh* - 'signs' refers to the staff of Moshe." Thus, at the infancy of the Jewish nation, the rapport between Hashem and the former slaves was supernatural. Now, as they are about to enter Eretz Yisroel, Hashem wants to teach them what the procedure will be in case of a drought. The Mishna (*Ta'anis* 2:1) teaches that the community would bring out the Ark to the town square, and the eldest among them would preach ways of inspiration. This was to be the new method, the new rapport between the nation and Hashem. Moshe, explains the *Netziv*, due to his anger, forgot this approach and relied upon the former proven method of hitting the rock, which is why Moshe believed he had the staff in the first place, if the new method did not succeed.

The *Ohr Hachaim* suggests a different approach, citing a Midrash (*Yalkut*, *Parshas Chukas* #764), which says that Moshe was instructed by Hashem, "Teach one chapter [of Torah] before it," meaning learn Torah before the rock, and nature will respond positively on behalf of the Torah, that nature is subservient to the Torah, as is understood by Chazal. "*Breishis*," for Israel, who are called "*reishis*," did Hashem create Heaven and Earth. The ideal harmony between nature and Israel is that nature is to serve Israel's needs. Thus, the *Ohr Hachaim* explains that the significance of the splitting of the Red Sea was not so much the actual parting of the waters, but rather, the timing of the event. He notes (*Shemos* 14:24) that the water split for Rav Pinchas ben Yair (*Chullin* 7a). He had the merit of Torah, so it is understandable that the water should divide. However, at *Yam Suf*, they had not yet received the Torah, and still the water split! This was indeed a miracle!

While much of *Mai Merivah* is couched in mystery, one concept emerges most clearly. The world was created to sustain the Jewish people and the study of Torah. Often, we marvel at the ability of young kollel families to make ends meet. The response to that wonderment is that of the *Yalkut*: "*sha-neh alov perek echad*" - one Mishna, one *daf* of Gemara, one *siman* of *Shulchan Aruch*, has positive consequences beyond our rational comprehension.

RABBI YITZCHAK ADLERSTEIN

How to Win Friends and Influence Rocks

Based on Mei Marom, Bamidbar Maamarim 37, 40

We invest heavily in our link to the past – to our forebears, and to the events in their lives. That is a very good thing. Except when it isn't. Had Moshe understood the exact prescription for connecting to what came before, he would not have struck the rock.

Want to get someone to act according to a higher consciousness than they usually do? Generally, you have two options. You can speak convincingly, so that they come to internalize the value that you promote. All of the resistance to a higher truth melts away when you demonstrate to them the majesty and splendor contained in their own souls. Alternatively, you can speak reprovingly, from a position of authority. If you choose the latter, your audience accepts the reproach sufficiently to refrain from some dastardly deed, but their spiritual consciousness remains where it was before.

Hashem instructed Moshe to speak to the rock. Moshe, however, struck it. Hashem faulted him for failing to "believe in Me, to sanctify Me." We struggle to understand why Moshe's small error should be held against him as a deficiency in belief, of all things. The explanation lies in the two approaches we described above.

Hashem wanted Moshe to speak to the rock – to employ the first of the two approaches we described above – in order to instruct him about the nature of the Jewish soul. He wanted to make it clear that this soul is always, always capable of rising to that higher plane. There are those who stumble and fall, to be sure. But even they fail to permanently damage the core of that soul. Their sin remains in the past, while growth and change are part of a future that can free itself from the past. Klal Yisrael exists for that future.

Speaking to the rock would demonstrate that Klal Yisrael can always respond to appeals for elevated change, just as the rock did. Klal Yisrael lives in the future and its guarantee of attaining the highest levels far more than it is rooted in the past. Moshe certainly accepted this but did not think that the Bnei Yisrael standing before him had yet attained such a level. G-d regarded this as a form of disbelief because any failure to fully appreciate that the *kedushah* of Klal Yisrael derives from their future rather than the past is a form of disbelief. It is disbelief in the possibility of demonstrating His *kedushah* through them

We see the primacy of the future rather than the past in other places. Chazal tell us that Avraham was saved in the merit of those who would descend from him. In other words, what the future would bring was of greater consequence than the sterling accomplishments of Avraham's past.

Similarly, Chazal's treatment of *parah adumah*, the red heifer. "Let the mother come and clean up after her son." The atonement for the past hinges on the future yet to be. This, too, is reflected in the teaching that Moshe's *parah adumah* remains for all times. In Moshe's activities, the future was constantly represented.

JOKES

Why do cows wear bells? *Because their horns don't work*
How does a cucumber become a pickle? *It goes through a jarring experience.*
What building in your town has the most stories? *The public library*
What kind of water can't freeze? *Hot water*
What goes up but never comes down? *Your age*

Control tower: What's your location?
Pilot: I'm in the cockpit.
Control tower: I mean, where is the airplane?
Pilot: Mainly behind me.

The Old West

Back in the frontier days, a westbound wagon train was lost and low on food.
No other humans had been seen for days, when finally they saw an old Jewish man sitting beneath a tree. The leader rushed to him and said, "We're lost and running out of food. Is there someplace ahead where we can get food?"
"Vell," the old Jew said, "I vouldn't go up dat hill und down the other side. Somevun told me you'll run into a big bacon tree."
"A bacon tree?" asked the wagon train leader.
"Yah, ah bacon tree. Trust me. For nuttin vud I lie."
The leader goes back and tells his people that if nothing else, they might be able to find food on the other side of the next ridge.
"So why did he say not to go there?" some of the pioneers asked.
"Oh, you know those Jews - they don't eat bacon."
So the wagon train goes up the hill and down the other side. Suddenly, Indians attack and massacre everyone except the leader, who barely manages to escape back to the old Jew, who's enjoying a "glassel tea."
The near-dead man starts shouting, "You fool! You sent us to our deaths! We followed your instructions, but there was no bacon tree! There were hundreds of Indians who killed everyone."
The old Jew holds up his hand and says, "Oy, vait a minute." He then gets out an old English-Yiddish dictionary and begins thumbing through it. "Gevalt, I made ah big mistake. It vuz not a bacon tree. It vuz a ham bush!"

Australia's Biggest Export

Fun fact: Australia's biggest export is boomerangs. It's also their biggest import.

ZERA SHIMSHON

Talking to the Rock

And you shall speak to the rock (20:8).

The Medrash says (*Yalkut* 763) that when a young child misbehaves, his father hits him. When he gets older, his father uses words to discipline him. Similarly, Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu, "When this rock was 'small' (the Jewish people were at an earlier stage; see *Shemos* 17:8), you hit the rock. However, now, you should speak to the rock."

The Zera Shimshon explains this Medrash in the following manner:

As is well known, the Torah is compared to water. The Zera Shimshon understands that the story of the hitting of the rock holds within it a lesson about learning Torah.

Hashem made a covenant with us over the Oral Torah (*Gittin* 60b). The *Yerushalmi* (*Pe'ah* 2:4) says that the oral words (of Torah) are more beloved than the written ones. However, in other places, it seems the covenant is one rooted in a promise of punishment (if we veer from the Torah), not one based only on love. This is represented by the way the Torah was given – with fire and thunder. And yet, in many *pesukim* and Talmudic teachings, there is a clear implication of the great love through which Hashem gave us the Torah.

To explain this, the Zera Shimshon cites the Gemara (*Pesachim* 68b) in which R' Sheshes said, "Rejoice, my soul, for your sake I learn." The Gemara asks how R' Sheshes can say this. Don't we know that if not for Torah learning, the world would cease to exist? (Thus, R' Sheshes's learning wasn't for himself.) The Gemara explains that in the beginning of one's learning, he does it for himself, and later, he comes to do it for the sake of Hashem.

Therefore, the covenant binding the Jewish people to the Torah, which seems to be one of judgment, is only for the individual who is learning for his own sake. However, when one learns for the sake of Hashem, his covenant is one of love.

The whole episode of Moshe Rabbeinu hitting the stone to bring out its water is a hint to the Torah. In fact, the Medrash says that the words that Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to say to the rock to bring forth its water were words of Mishna! As well, the *Megaleh Amukos* writes (74) that had Moshe Rabbeinu spoken to the rock as opposed to hitting it, there would not have been any of the subsequent arguments in *halacha* that exist today.

This is why Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu that this scenario of the lack of water is different than the one earlier in the Jewish people's history. Since at this point, the Jewish people had grown in their attachment to Torah, and hitting the rock to bring out its water (which represents Torah) symbolizes the beginner's way of rebuke, Hashem wanted Moshe Rabbeinu to speak to the rock since that is the stage that the Jewish people were at – their covenant was one of love.

SHIUR SCHEDULE

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BY RABBI SIMCHA BUNIM BURGER
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