

LAMPLIGHTER

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Chukas

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Chukas, begins: "This is the statute (chok) of the Torah." As we immediately learn, "this" refers to the commandment of the red heifer.

The mitzvah (commandment) of the red heifer falls into the category of chukim (statutes) - mitzvot for which there is no rational explanation. There are many such super-rational mitzvot, i.e., the prohibition against eating non-kosher food, or wearing shaatnez (linen and wool in the same garment). Yet the mitzvah of the red heifer is the foremost example of this type of commandment, as it completely transcends human understanding.

"Chok" comes from the root word meaning "engraved." There are two ways in which letters may be written: with ink on parchment or paper, or by inscribing them on stone. When letters are written with ink, they remain separate entities from the parchment or paper; when they are inscribed, they become an integral part of the stone itself. And yet, upon examination, we see that there are two levels of "engraving":

The first level is when the letters are engraved on only one side of the stone. This type of inscription bears a superficial resemblance to the written word on parchment.

A second, higher level of inscription is that which was found on the Tablets of the Law which contained the Ten Commandments. In a miraculous manner, these letters were equally visible from both sides, seeming to float in the stone without relation to the stone itself.

These two types of inscriptions allude to the two levels of chukim. The first category contains those super-rational mitzvot which, although we do not understand the reason behind them, the human mind may begin to comprehend them on some level.

The higher category of super-rational mitzvot, however, is completely beyond the human ken, above and beyond our ability to understand G-d's Divine wisdom.

A Jew, by nature, desires to fulfill G-d's will. It is the natural consequence of his possessing a G-dly soul, which exists on a plane which is higher than the intellect. This nature finds its fullest expression in the performance of super-rational commandments.

When a Jew observes a mitzvah that has a rational explanation, the fact that he is doing so simply to fulfill the will of G-d is not so apparent, for his own thoughts and understanding may obscure, however slightly, his pure motivation.

Thus it is precisely in the observance of chukim, "letters which are inscribed from both sides," that the Jew's innate desire to obey G-d's command is most obviously expressed.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 8

The Call of the Hero

By Shimon Posner

Have you ever heard of Reb Mendel? He smuggled Jews out of the Soviet Union at the end of World War Two. The Communists gave him fifteen years in the Siberian gulags.

Ever heard of Mumeleh Sorah? She did the same, but they never bothered sending her away. For decades her family never knew her *yahrtzeit*; they still don't know where, if anywhere, the Communists buried her.

Heard of the mother who backed out of the driveway and pinned her toddler under the rear wheel? She lifted the car by herself and saved her son.

When we ask heroes from where they got the strength to do incredible things, they give lousy answers. Inevitably, their answer is "I had to do it," or to put it differently, they couldn't not do it. It's not just modesty that makes them squirm when looking for answers; it is the almost-awkward simplicity. For, regardless of their level of articulation, they cannot come up with any good reason for why they did what they did.

Reasons are powerful motives for doing things. Logic is compelling. But logic is in the head, not the guts. So logic compels our minds to move. A mother's love is not in the head; therefore all of her moves. Even parts of her she never knew she had move to free her baby from danger. She can't put it into words, because there are no words in the gut. There is a place so profound that it cannot be made shallow with talk.

And there, right there where the deepest (no, you can't really even subjugate them to the word) emotions reside; the Jew has nothing but a visceral connection to G-d. Not a staid, progressive, links-in-a-chain connection, but a reflexive, instinctive, metal-to-magnet connection. You can't feel it, and you could live a life without ever knowing it was inside of you. Because like heroes, it doesn't look to present itself. But if the moment calls for it, the response is automatic and Jewish. (Think of sworn atheists who, when it came down to it gave their lives rather than surrender their identity, or the Jew-in-name-only who, when things were counting on him, came through.) Why? I just couldn't do anything else.

We have mitzvahs that we like. Family Seders with favourite recipes, Chanukah songs and *latkes*, Purim plays and Sukkah parties, a melody that lifts you to your feet, a Talmudic insight that dazzles in its elegant simplicity, a Chassidic story that soothes with its empathy; They each relate to a different aspect of our personality and strengthen it Jewishly. But all these precious experiences, for all the growth they give us, do not touch our *kishkes*. Only the aspect of a mitzvah which is beyond our intellectual grasp and not within our emotional embrace can resonate so deeply. These mitzvahs are called *chukim*, and it is with these mitzvahs that this week's Torah portion begins.

Slice of LIFE

A Subway Conversation with a Kohen

Yossi Marcus

It was a day like any other. I was standing outside the synagogue of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, enjoying a break from my Talmud studies. I had chosen a good time, for just at that moment the Rebbe had emerged from his office and was now making his way to his car. His path, however, was obstructed by a young man who looked out of place in the crowd of Chassidim.

The young man was tall, not older than twenty-five. A small *kipah* sat awkwardly on his curly hair, which extended several inches longer than the short hair of the Chasidic young men congregating on the sidewalk.

The young man seemed to hesitate at first but then said a few words to the Rebbe. I heard neither the question nor the Rebbe's response, but I saw the Rebbe point to the sky and make a circle with his finger in the air. The young man seemed dissatisfied and spoke another few words to the Rebbe. This time the Rebbe smiled and pointed to the young man's heart as he responded. With that the conversation ended. The young man stood motionless and watched as the Rebbe got in to his car and was driven off down Eastern Parkway.

After a few dazed moments, the young man turned and entered the synagogue. I followed him. He sat down on one of the wooden benches, put his head in his hands and began to weep. This went on for about ten minutes, after which he composed himself, read a few psalms from a prayer book, then walked up to the Ark and kissed the curtain.

As he left the building, I found myself following him out into the street and down the stairs into the subway station. As we paid for our fares I said to him, "So where're you going?" He said he didn't know. I said, "Good, so we're going to the same place."

We sat quietly at first. The train rumbled on past Nostrand Avenue station. As we neared Franklin Avenue, I finally said it.

"So what happened there?"

"There?"

"Yes. What did you say, and what did he answer?"

"Oh, you mean the Rebbe?"

"Yes."

He paused for a moment then said: "I asked the Rebbe where G-d was. And he said, 'Everywhere.'"

"Then what did you say?"

"I said, 'I'm serious.'"

"You said, 'I'm serious?'"

"Well, I didn't really mean to say it. It kind

of blurted out of me. Even with my minimal contact with Chasidic Rebbes, I was pretty sure I had said the wrong thing. I was surprised when he smiled. I think he liked my response. The sincerity, perhaps. That's when he said, 'G-d is inside you, right there.' And he pointed to my heart."

It dawned on me that we had not introduced ourselves. I guess it had just dawned on him as well, since he put out a shaky hand and said: "I'm Danny. Danny Cohen."

"I'm Israel. Israel Lipkind. So you're a Kohen, I guess."

"Yes. A descendant of Aaron the High Priest, who loved peace and pursued it. I'm from Long Beach."

Ah, on Long Island."

"No, Long Beach, California."

"Oh. A California boy."

"Yes. And I'm engaged."

"Mazal Tov!"

"Hold the congratulations. She's not Jewish."

I held the congratulations. And my breath. I guess you could say I lived a pretty sheltered life back then. It wasn't every day that I bumped into Jews who plan to intermarry.

We sat quietly again as a crowd joined us at Grand Army Plaza. An older couple entered the train, gave us a curious once-over and sat down at a safe distance.

The Kohen resumed his tale and I listened in silence.

"At first it meant nothing to me -- the fact that she was not a Jew. Judaism did not play a major role in my parents' home. We had the Passover *seuder* with the Manischewitz wine and the Maxwell House Haggadah, my sister had a book by Martin Buber, we read The Chosen and there was a lithograph in our living room with three rabbis engaged in Talmudic debate who hovered over us as we sat on the vinyl black couch and watched Ponch and Jon chase bad guys down the 101.

"I was surprised that my parents cared. My mother cried for days. My father wouldn't speak to me. Their reaction gave me pause, but I intended to go ahead despite them.

"A few months ago, Lisa -- that's my fiancée -- took me to the church where we're supposed to get married. That's when something clicked. I tried to tell myself, 'It's just a building. What's the big deal if this guy's wearing a long robe and his necklace is not exactly a Star of David?'"

"As we left the church, my heart felt empty. I said nothing and we went home.

"The next day, Lisa and I were out shopping. Across the street was a Jewish bookstore and I suggested we go in. A man with a long beard approached me with what looked like two black boxes with black straps attached to them. 'Shalom,' he said, 'would you

like to put on Tefillin?' I wasn't sure what that meant but how could I refuse this saintly man? I said, 'Sure', and waited for instructions. There were none. He simply rolled up my left sleeve and began tying the straps around them. He told me to say the *Shema* -- which I knew from a Jewish day camp I attended one summer -- and to speak to G-d.

"That threw me. Though I had been to a synagogue a number of times, I had never considered actually talking to G-d. It felt silly. I wasn't sure why. Perhaps I didn't think He would listen or that He existed at all.

"The man started taking off the straps from my arm and head. He turned to Lisa and said, 'So are you two married?' I said, 'No, soon'. He said, 'Mazal Tov' and I didn't bother to tell him.

"That night I couldn't sleep. In the morning I went back to the bookstore. The man was there saying the *Shema* with another customer. I waited. Then it was my turn and I put on the *Tefillin* again. And when he was taking them off I asked him questions and he gave me some answers and I asked more questions and he gave me more answers and we began to study together and I learned more about Judaism in one day than I had learned my entire life.

"It still wasn't enough. My brain got it but it was not translating. The information was stalled at the intellectual level. When I mentioned that I would be going to New York for a week, the man told me I must visit the Rebbe in Brooklyn. And so I did."

The older couple left us at Bowling Green, not without a side-long glance on their way out.

I straightened the *kipah* on the Kohen's head and he resumed:

"When I came here today, I saw the Rebbe. It was my first time seeing him but I knew it was him. I had the sense that this was my chance to ask -- that if I didn't ask now I never would. And so I asked. I asked him where G-d was and he said everywhere. But that didn't satisfy me. I said, 'I'm serious.' I really need to know. This is personal. I'm not doing a research paper here on where G-d might be. I need to know. I'm serious.

"And he smiled, as if he were expecting, hoping I would say that. And that's when he pointed at my heart and said: Right there. G-d is inside you.

"Simple words. Anyone could have said it. But the Rebbe believed it. And because he believed it I believed it. I thought to myself, 'So this is what it's like to look into the eyes of a Moses and to catch a glimpse of your higher self in the reflection.' I felt like a small flame dancing up and joining the larger fire.

"At that moment the gap was bridged. My head and heart were one and I made my decision to call off the wedding."

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ISSUE 1091

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Nine red heifers were prepared from the time that the Jewish people were commanded this mitzvah until the Second Temple was destroyed. The first was prepared by Moshe; the second by Ezra, and another seven were prepared from Ezra until the Temple's destruction. The tenth Heifer will be prepared by Moshiach, may he speedily be revealed, Amen, may it be the will of G-d.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5715
[May 22, 1955]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

... It is surely unnecessary to elaborate on the close relationship between the physical and the spiritual, which even modern science has become convinced of.

Physically, at this time of the year, we find Nature again in full bloom. After a period of hibernation, it springs back to life with renewed vigour and vitality, faithfully reproducing the same elements which characterized the same period a year ago, and two years ago, and all the way back to the first seasons of the Nature cycle.

In our religious and spiritual life, also, we have the seasons and festivals which recur year after year, and reproduce the same spiritual elements which first gave rise to them. Thus, at this time of the year, with the days of Sefirah connecting the festival of Passover (physical freedom) with its culmination in Shavuot (spiritual freedom), we can-if we are sufficiently prepared and attuned to it-relive the experiences of our ancestors who actually witnessed the Revelation and accepted the Torah at Sinai.

What a long way our ancestors covered in the course of but 50 days: from the abominations of Egyptian "culture," in which moral depravity and polytheism reigned supreme (as recent archaeological discoveries have amply brought to light)-to pure monotheism at Mount Sinai, where the Jew receives the Torah with the call of *Na'aseh v'nishma*. *Na'aseh* first, i.e., complete surrender of man to G-d.

Through the medium of the Torah, G-d "descends" on Mount Sinai, and the Jew ascends to G-d - the soul is released from all its fetters lying it down to earthly things, and, on the wings of fear of G-d and love of G-d, unites with the Creator in complete communion. It is then that it can fully appreciate the inner meaning of "I am G-d thy G-d, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage," and the rest of the Ten Commandments, till "Thou shalt not covet," i.e., not only refrain from taking what is not yours, but not even desire it.

This great rise from the abyss of Egypt to the sublime heights of Sinai was attained by pure and simple faith in G-d, from the day when parents and children, women and infants, several million souls in all, set out on the trek through the desert, not dismayed by the irrationality of it, but simply obeying the Divine call with absolute trust. This won special Divine favour, in the words of the Prophet: "I remember unto thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal, thy going after Me into the wilderness." It is this faith that carried the Jews through the ages, an insignificant physical minority in the midst of a hostile world, a spot of light threatened by an overwhelming darkness. It is this absolute faith in G-d that we need nowadays more than ever before.

It is said, the whole sun is reflected in a drop of water. And so the whole of our nation is reflected in each individual, and what is true of the nation as a whole is true of the individual.

The core of Jewish vitality and indestructibility is in its pure faith in G-d: not in some kind of an abstract Deity, hidden somewhere in the heavenly spheres, who regards this world from a distance; but absolute faith in a very personal G-d, who is the very life and existence of everybody; who permeates where one is, or what one does. Where there is such faith, there is no room for fear or anxiety, as the Psalmist says, "I fear no evil, for Thou art with me," with me, indeed, at all times, not only on Shabbos or Yom Tov, or during prayer or meditation on G-d. And when one puts his trust in G-d, unconditionally and unreservedly, one realizes what it means to be really free and full of vigour, for all one's energy is released in the most constructive way, not only in one's own behalf, but also in behalf of the environment at large.

The road is not free from obstacles and obstructions, for in the Divine order of things we are expected to attain our goal by effort; but if we make a determined effort, success is divinely assured, and the obstacles and obstructions which at first loom large, dissolve and disappear.

I wish you to tread this road of pure faith in G-d, without over [*unclear in original*] introspection and self-searching, as in the simple illustration of a man walking: he will walk most steadily and assuredly if he will not be conscious of his walk and not seek to consciously coordinate the hundreds of muscles operative in locomotion, or he would be unable to make his first step.

Wishing you success in all above, and hoping to hear good news from you and yours,

With the blessing of a happy Yom Tov of Receiving the Torah with inner joy,

Sincerely,

[Signature]

CUSTOMS CORNER

While we must recognize that every illness is a message from G-d and take appropriate spiritual action, trusting that healing ultimately comes from G-d alone, at the same time, we may, and must, use medicines that have healing powers.

Here are a few laws that apply to patients and doctors.

Since the Torah gives permission to a doctor to heal, it is mandatory for an ill person to go to a doctor to be treated, and not rely on a miracle. One who does not do so is considered to be spilling blood. While it is true that had the person merited, he would not have become sick in the first place, now that he is sick, he needs to seek treatment.

One who is swallowing a medication should not make a blessing on it if it has no taste or if it has a bitter taste. If it has a good taste, one should make the appropriate blessing before eating it, as well as an after-blessing if a sufficient quantity was consumed.

If a doctor knows of another doctor in his area that is better able than himself to heal a particular illness, it is incumbent upon him to refer a patient with that illness to that physician.

A WORD

from the Director

This past Tuesday, the third of Tammuz, marked the day of passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. This coming Thursday we will be celebrating the 12th day of Tammuz, a significant day in the Chabad calendar, so it is timely at this time to reflect and focus on the mission and directives of the Rebbe.

At such a significant time it is proper to recall the Rebbe's directive which he outlined at the outset of his leadership. The Rebbe reminded each individual of the responsibility to address the task for which we were put on earth, namely, to fashion from it a dwelling place for its creator.

On the third of Tammuz another event occurred; the Previous Rebbe's death sentence was commuted to exile for life in Kostrama. Then, on the twelfth day of this month in 1927, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn was informed of his release from Soviet exile and on 13 Tammuz he actually left the city of his exile.

The foremost commentator on the Torah, Rashi, explains that "The Nasi - the leader of the generation - is a composite of the entire people." Thus, whatever happens to the leader effects not only him personally but the entire generation.

The redemption of the Previous Rebbe started on 3 Tammuz and was completed on 12 and 13 Tammuz, sparking a vast increase in the service of spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus, the inner dimensions of the Torah. The spreading of these teachings is a catalyst for transforming the world into a G-dly place, a mission entrusted to each and every one of us.

Finding ourselves in the midst of these auspicious days, we should endeavour to increase in our efforts of spreading Torah knowledge and specifically its intrinsic and deeper meanings. This undertaking will help bring us to our goal, our own redemption from exile.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED

Once...

AN ORPHAN'S MISSING MITZVA

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz was once at a *brit milah* [circumcision] of a baby who was already orphaned from both of his parents. His father had passed away after his mother had conceived, and his mother died in childbirth. At the ceremony, there was a tremendous amount of crying and wailing, which created a very somber and morose atmosphere.

The Belzer ordered that the crying should stop, saying that *brit milah* is a joyous *mitzvah* occasion. Crying is therefore prohibited, and it will in no way help the unfortunate child. Later, at the festive meal in honour of the circumcision, the Rebbe commanded that they should sing the entire *Tmany Apei* (literally, "eight faces"-a reference to Psalm 119, which contains eight verses for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in sequence. [Belzer Chassidim sing this Psalm throughout Chanukah). Afterwards the Rebbe explained his request by telling the following story.

Whenever a very difficult question arose to Rebbe Yaakov Yitzchak of Pshischa, known as the *Yehudi HaKadosh* [the Holy Jew], he would concentrate very deeply, often steeped in his thoughts for half an hour or more, until the answer came to him. Once, when one of these questions came up, one of his students, a young man who was orphaned from his father, became very hungry, and decided to dart home to his mother for a quick bite.

He quickly ran home and asked his mother for some food, reminding her that he was in the middle of his studies, and would have to return immediately. After preparing and serving the food, his mother asked him to bring down a package that she needed from the attic. Nervous about returning late, the young man told his mother he had to return right away. As he hurried back to the Study Hall, he realized what he had done - after all, isn't the study of Torah supposed to lead to fulfillment of its *mitzvot*, and he had just missed an opportunity to honour his mother?

He quickly did an about-face and ran back, and pleaded for his mother's forgiveness. When she agreed, he brought the package down from the attic, and quickly ran back again to the Study Hall. Upon his arrival there, when he opened the door, the *Yehudi* arose from his deep thoughts, and promptly stood up to greet the young man.

Noticing that the Rebbe had stood up, all the other *talmidim* [students] also stood. The young man was quite bewildered at all of this. The *Yehudi* then delivered his answer to the difficult question, and asked everyone to sit down. Sitting down with them, he turned to the young man and said, "Now tell us everything that happened to you."

After the young man told his story, the *Yehudi* said, "Surely you wonder why I stood up. The *Gemara* [Kiddushin 32b] says that Abayei [one of the major sages of the Talmud] was an orphan from both parents. His father had passed away after his mother had conceived, and his mother died in childbirth. How, then, could he fulfill the command of honouring one's parents, which is one of the Ten Commandments? Therefore, whenever anyone fulfills this *mitzvah* properly, Abayei accompanies him. So, since you did this *mitzvah* so well, Abayei went with you. When you came here, Abayei came with you, and I stood up in his honour. And it was he who gave me the answer to the difficult question."

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz then added that in the Maharsha's commentary to this *Gemara*, he writes that the name Abayei is alluded to in the verse, "*asher becha yerucham yasom*" [the first letter of each word spells out the name Abayei], meaning, "in You the orphan finds mercy" [Hoshea, 14:4]. "This verse teaches that the best way to help the orphan is not by crying over him, but by insuring that he receives a proper Torah education as he grows up. For the *gematria* [numerical value] of the letters of '*becha*' [in You] is 22, hinting at the 22 letters of the Torah, and if we bring the child up according to the Torah, this will bring great satisfaction to his parents in Heaven."

"Now you can understand why I asked you to sing *Tmany Apei*," the Rebbe concluded, "for in the entire psalm is about the *Kedusha* [sanctity] and greatness of the Torah."

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And Miriam died there (20:1)

Why does the account of Miriam's death follow the [laws of the] red heifer? To teach us you that even as the red heifer achieves atonement, so does the death of the righteous achieve atonement. (*Talmud, Mo'ed Kattan 28a*)

Then Israel sang this song: Spring up, O well; sing to it (21:17)

Why is Moshe not mentioned here? Because he owed his punishment to water, and no man praises his executioner. Why is not the name of G-d mentioned? This may be illustrated by the case of a governor who made a feast for the king. The king asked: "Will my friend be there?" "No," he was told. Said he: "Then I also am not going there." In the same way, G-d said: "Since Moshe is not mentioned there, I also will not be mentioned there." (*Midrash Rabbah*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 14 JUNE 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
4:48MELBOURNE	5:50
4:52ADELAIDE	5:52
4:42BRISBANE	5:38
6:11DARWIN	7:03
4:40GOLD COAST	5:36
5:01PERTH	5:59
4:35SYDNEY	5:34
4:39CANBERRA	5:39
4:30LAUNCESTON	5:34
4:53AUCKLAND	5:53
4:39WELLINGTON	5:43
4:24HOBART	5:30
4:38BYRON BAY	5:34
6:52SINGAPORE	7:44



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS CHUKAS
6 TAMMUZ • 14 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:48 PM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:35 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:56 AM
	MINCHA:	4:55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:50 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:45 PM